FANNY FITZ-YORK,

Heiress of Tremorne.

IN THREE VOLUMES.



BY

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FANNY FITZ-YORK.

CHAP. I.

THE FAIR PENITENT,—RELATIONS NOT ALWAYS FRIENDS,—A SUMMONS,—AND A DEPARTURE.

ON the fifth day after the gaieties of Burford, as they were sitting down to dinner, Sir Herbert Huntley was announced, and entered the room with that well-bred ease, for which he was remarkable.

After the usual salutations, he walked up to the Duchess, and, holding his hands in a supplicating attitude, exclaimed, "if your Grace, Mrs. Bloomfield, and these young ladies, will pardon my late deser-

tion, I promise in future to be found at my post, even amidst difficulty and danger. But, why talk of imaginary difficulties or fancied dangers? None can surpass the present! and, if I escape the fire of so many brilliant eyes, I may consider myself invulnerable to every other shaft."

"After dinner, Sir Herbert," replied the Duchess, affecting much gravity, "you will be tried,"—looking round, "not by your *peers*, but by this *peerless* company, and must stand or fall by their decision." Miss Fitz-York is the principal witness against you, — for, having unfortunately promised her hand to a runaway, a deserter from the standard of beauty, she might have worn out her hours in fruitless expectation, had not your military friend arrived at the critical moment, when curiosity was on tip-toe to discover the ungallant being, who could, on any occasion, leave 'mettle so attractive.'"

His Grace now made a move, that all further discussion on the subject should cease, since Sir Herbert's innocence was

fully established by a voluntary surrender.

During the evening promenade, Sir Herbert, seeing interest and curiosity strongly blended in Fanny's speaking face, drew her aside, and, without circumlocution, commenced his narrative.

"When I quitted you, my dear friend, I made my way to the upper boxes, and easily discovered two females answering your description; one of whom I knew to be Julia, from a family resemblance to my beloved Rose. Without ceremony I placed myself by her side, and, whilst conversing upon indifferent subjects, gave her to understand my name and title. The vain girl seemed proud of her supposed conquest, and made not the least scruple of accompanying me to the inn, where I ordered a chaise and four to be prepared immediately. Meanwhile I painted, in as forcible language as I was able, the misery and disgrace of her present situation, and my wish to see her reinstated in the bosom of her family,—a family, who I was well

convinced would never reproach her, but, on the contrary, rejoice at the recovery of a stray sheep into the fold of virtue. This, and much more it would be needless to repeat, seemed to pierce her very soul. Tears chaced each other down her highly rouged cheeks,—and, clasping her hands in agony, she exclaimed, 'Merciful God! do you know me then? Do you know that I have brought disgrace and infamy on a family before unspotted,—stained the virgin cheek of a sister with shame,—and more, much more than this, do you know that I am a murderer,—a parricide?' She shrieked out the last words with almost convulsive frenzy,' and instantly fainted away. Two hours elapsed ere she perfectly recovered her recollection; but, when I informed her a chaise was prepared, and that I would myself restore her to a family, who had never ceased to regret her loss, she interrupted me, by exclaiming, 'but I have no father to receive me!' and, covering her face with her hands, sobbed aloud.

"To chace away these melancholy

thoughts, I inquired if she had no travelling dress? To this she answered in the affirmative, and retiring to arrange her appearance, I strolled into the inn yard, and there encountered Colonel Parke, whom I commissioned with a letter for you, and then handed my fair penitent into the chaise. Our journey, at the commencement, was all tears and self-upbraidings; but, ere we reached Exeter, I had reasoned her into some degree of calmness and composure. In the recital of her story, she spoke only in general terms of her seducer; indeed, throughout, she avoided mentioning names as much as possible; but, I learn, from her narrative, that she had twice encountered you and her sister; 'and, oh!' she added, 'with what delight, the latter time, should I have appealed to their protection, had not shame prevented me.'

"I then inquired, how she became acquainted with the death of her father? 'I hope you will think me sincere,' she replied, 'when I solemnly affirm, that the course I have pursued, since my betrayer left me,

has been attended with remorse and bitter discontent. I reflected with anguish on what I *was*, and what I *had* been, and would have given worlds had I possessed them, to retrace my steps. That, alas! was impossible! And, as vanity was the cause of my ruin, the same senseless passion whispered, that, as there was no recalling the past, 'twere better to be the idol of the multitude than subject myself to the mortifying humiliation of seeking protection, when I was conscious I deserved nothing but stern reproof.

'A severe illness, however, changed my sentiments, and I determined to return, like the prodigal, and throw myself at my father's feet. This design I put in practice; and, disguising myself in mean attire, reached Tremorne, at the moment the church bell was tolling a requiem to some departed spirit. The sound seemed to chill my very heart:—the blood crept slowly through my veins,—and inspired by an undefinable impulse, I entered the church, and waited, in a retired pew, for

the arrival of the mournful procession. Whilst busy expectation conjured up a thousand dreadful images, every stroke of the muffled bell, sounding at long intervals, seemed as though it were hastening the period of my own dissolution; for, ere the sable throng entered, life and death appeared to dispute which should claim me for their own. But, great God! how shall I paint my feelings, when I saw the coffin followed by my three brothers and Rosette? I spoke not,—I stirred not:—horror and despair had paralyized my faculties, and I was nearly as inanimate as he who gave me being.

'The procession left the church in the same order they entered it, but still I remained: my viewless gaze fixed on the spot where late the coffin stood,—horrified at the past, and wreckless of the future, I know not what length of time had elapsed, when a man entered, and seeing a stranger, said he was going to lock the door.

'Not receiving an answer, for my facul-

ties were nearly suspended, he repeated his information, adding, 'what do you remain here for?' 'What indeed?' I replied. 'You have been asleep I suppose,' he continued, 'or you would have known the poor old man's funeral has been over some time.'

'What disorder did he die of, friend?' said I, in trembling accents.

'A broken heart. Take warning young woman from the wicked conduct of her, who brought her father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.' I suppose a groan escaped me, for he inquired if I was ill, and where I came from? But, without answering, I walked out of the church, resolved never more to shew myself in a place where disgrace and reproach alone awaited me. Ere I quitted the village, as I thought for ever, I glided unperceived to the grave of my late surviving parent, and watering the mould which covered his remains plentifully with my tears, directed my course to the London road, and arrived once more in the metropolis, where no

means of subsistence presents itself, to the lost daughters of pollution, but a continuance in those courses from which a feeling mind revolts.'

"I could have contradicted this," continued Sir Herbert, "by naming the Magdalen; but, trusting she would never again stand in need of such an asylum, I forbore. The meeting between the brother and sister I shall not attempt to describe, it will come with much greater effect and feeling from his own mouth. Suffice it at present to say, I left him rejoicing over the recovered penitent, and flew back, on the wings of politeness, to apologize to her Grace for what would appear both rude and ungrateful."

Fanny was sensibly affected by this little narrative, and paid Sir Herbert some well-deserved compliments, on the philanthropy and real goodness displayed throughout the whole of his proceedings. "How much, my good Sir," added she, "will this conduct endear you to the brothers of the unhappy Julia; and, if Rosette's at-

tachment be capable of augmentation, how rich will be your reward! If every one blessed with power and fortune would act, only once in their lives, as you have now done, what a diminution of female misery we should find; and how strong a proof this single instance exhibits, that opportunity alone is wanting to recal the poor wanderer to her duty."

Leslie felt by no means comfortable during this tête-à-tête; and, when he saw Sir Herbert and his fair companion, whose eyes evidently betrayed the affecting nature of their communication, approach, he flattered himself that secrecy might be no longer necessary, especially towards one, who, knowing there was something to conceal, had turned the current of curiosity from our heroine, and made himself in some degree responsible. Nothing, however, escaped either that led, even remotely, to the cause of Sir Herbert's absence; and, when they joined the rest of the party, the subject seemed to be forgotten.

An excursion to Woodstock had been some time in contemplation; and, as our heroine's visit was drawing to a close, the following day* was fixed upon. Sir Herbert's equipage still remained at Burford, and, by way of doing honour to his guest, the Duke committed all the young ladies to his protection; himself, the Duchess, and Mrs. Bloomfield, following in another carriage; and the young men attending on horseback. Fanny, seated by the Baronet on the driving box, had a fine opportunity of observing the country. The beauty and tractability of the horses surpassed every thing she could have imagined,—their owner she beheld with sisterly regard,—and Leslie with sedulous attention pointed out every thing worthy of observation;—in a word, nothing could be more delightful than the ride, nothing more charmingly attentive than her companions. Even Philippa appeared to lay aside much of her repulsion, and would occasionally join in the conversation, and ask questions about Devonshire, than

which no subject could be more gratifying to Fanny.

Thus disposed to give and receive pleasure the drive terminated; and, as Blenheim was the object of their curiosity, they proceeded to explore that superb monument of national gratitude.

The family were fortunately absent, which afforded an opportunity of stricter investigation than could otherwise have been allowed. After surveying the house, Leslie, to whom every object in the Park, from his long residence at Oxford, was familiar, led the way, and, without the assistance of a guide, who would have thrown a restraint on their actions, undertook to shew the *lions;* in which office he acquitted himself so well, that scarcely a nook was left unexplored. To this he added some true and many traditionary accounts of the beautiful, but unfortunate, Rosamond, whose bower he was describing, when a stilish party advanced from an opening to the right, and Fanny found herself, ere she was aware of her vicinity,

in the embrace of Lady Maria Mountcastle.

"My dear Fanny!" said the affectionate girl, "you know not what pleasure this meeting gives me. Where is Lady Ann?" looking around, "And who are your party? Moseley, why don't you advance?"

"Have I Miss Fitz-York's permission?" said he, faintly smiling.

"Certainly," replied Fanny, holding out her hand. "So near and dear a relation surely need not stand upon ceremony."

The cousins now retired from the group, each holding an arm of Moseley; where questions were multiplied by Maria, till our heroine knew not where to begin her answers. At length, she again repeated, "who are your party?" Fanny named them, but, when she mentioned Corbett, there was a degree of hesitating confusion in her manner, as though wishing too late to recal a name, which, from the recent duel, she naturally concluded could not be very pleasant to his opponent. The moment it was uttered, Moseley, snatching

away his arm, exclaimed, "H—l and fury! Is it to such a wretch I am sacrificed? But 'tis well, madam! I know not another circumstance that could so completely confirm my cure. Lord Moseley cannot condescend to be the rival of Captain Corbett, and must cease to respect the delicacy of any lady, who can be influenced by mere exterior."

He then walked away, and left Fanny overwhelmed with amazement. Maria likewise felt a pang at the mention of Corbett, heightened by her brother's concluding reflection; but it arose from retrospection, not jealousy; and might be called a feeling of shame, that her interest had ever been awakened by so unworthy an object. Quickly regaining her self-possession, and pressing Fanny's hand, she said, affectionately, "My dear cousin, you must pardon Moseley's impetuosity. He thinks himself injured, and cannot hear that man's name without irritation; but when, through your means, he becomes one of the family, I know his generous na-

ture will overlook past offence, for your sake."

"My dear Maria," replied Fanny, "you are both deceived. Corbett will never become one of the family through my means, he is to me perfectly odious; and if, to my hesitation in naming him, all this misunderstanding may be attributed, believe me, it arose from a motive directly the reverse of attachment."

"If your motive alludes to me," said Maria, "thank heaven! I am no longer a mark for pity. My partiality ceased with the worth of its object; and I now only wonder, that a being so utterly void of merit could ever interest my feelings. But where is your dear delightful mother?"

"In Cheshire," replied Fanny. "She is expected home in a few days, when I shall join her at Tremorne; and nothing would give us more sincere pleasure than to receive you there, if such an indulgence were not forbidden."

"I'll strive hard to accomplish it; at

any rate, my *heart* will be with you, should my *person* be denied. Lord and Lady Mountcastle are waiting for us at Woodstock, and, between ourselves,—I would not say such a thing to any body else for the world,—when her Ladyship sees the dignified patronage you possess, she may perhaps be taught, that no disgrace can follow her countenance; but, on the contrary, that such connections are calculated to do her honour."

The cousins now joined their respective friends, and soon afterwards the Duke's party reached the inn. The first person Fanny saw, was Lady Mountcastle, looking out of an open window, apparently in search of somebody. Our heroine instinctively bowed to the sister of Lady Ann and the mother of Maria; though, probably, if she had had time to consult either her feelings or her judgment, they would have told her, there was a duty due to herself paramount to every other obligation,—that Lady Mountcastle's conduct deserved no such sacrifice,—and that Lady Ann would

have been displeased at a condescension so unmerited.

Lady Mountcastle made no other return to the compliment than a confident stare at the whole party. But when she heard the Duke of Newland's carriages ordered, and saw the attention both their Graces paid to Fanny's accommodation, she said, to her Lord, "Is it possible this little nobody can have insinuated herself into one of the first families in the kingdom? And did you observe with what an air of triumph the creature bowed to me?"

"I saw the compliment, Lady Mountcastle———"

"Compliment! Grant me patience! Say the insult!"

"Give it what name you please; but I must speak in favour of the motive. Her look, and by that we must judge, betrayed no triumph, but expressed timidity, blended with respect."

"Oh! you were always partial to the girl, and that blinds you. I recollect you wanted me to notice her last winter, but I

am afraid Moseley made fool enough of himself, without any encouragement from me; and I would rather hear of his death than his marriage with the portionless daughter of Fitz-York."

The good-humoured sallies and cheerful mirth of the Duke's party bore so striking a contrast to the ill-temper and haughty pride of her Ladyship, and added so greatly to her natural acerbity, that when Moseley and Maria, with their friends, returned, she received them with a forbidding *hauteur*, and an air of reserve truly disgusting. The brother and sister felt assured that Fanny was the innocent cause of this added ill-humour, and forbore to name her. But their companions, not having the same motive, launched out in praise of her Ladyship's charming niece; all the females describing her as elegant, the gentlemen as bewitching.

"I think she has bewitched you all," said Lady Mountcastle. "For my part, I conceive the Duchess of Newland is doing her a great injury; for, by introducing her

into high life, she will imbibe notions altogether unsuitable to her future prospects, than which nothing that we have any idea of can well be more moderate. Yet, would you believe it? the mother's pride is so excessive, that nothing would satisfy her, last birth-day, but having her baby-faced daughter presented. I blushed for her folly, though it was no concern of mine, and was vexed that Lady Milford should be a party in the silly exhibition; but you all know what a strange character she is, and therefore will scarcely wonder at any of her actions."

"Lady Milford's actions may indeed excite wonder," said Moseley, "for she is, take her altogether, a most extraordinary woman. But I conceive it must be that kind of wonder which admiration calls forth."

"Admiration!" repeated Lady Mountcastle, with a sneer.

"Yes, madam," replied Moseley. "Lady Milford is one of the very few women who

can raise admiration to a degree of enthusiasm, without the aid of personal beauty."

"Heaven knows she has little of that to boast," said her Ladyship, laughing.

"But she has what is much superior, and more durable," replied Moseley. "The beauties of her mind, the simplicity of her manners, the sweetness of her temper, her superior knowledge and general suavity of disposition, claim and receive the homage due to such uncommon excellence; and will ever stamp her one of the first and best of women. But we are trespassing on the patience of our friends, by pursuing a subject in which they can feel little interest; and as few people visit Woodstock, without carrying away a sample of its manufactory, suppose we sally forth in quest of a glove shop."

Moseley's passion for our heroine, owed its excess, in a great measure, to opposition. It was opposition to the arbitrary wishes of an unfeeling and unjust parent, that first urged him to seek his aunt and cousin.

He found Lady Ann e[illegible]thing that was good and amiable; he saw Fanny lovely and interesting, and possessing sudden and violent passions, in addition to a nature ardent and generous, it was almost impossible he should escape heart-whole from the fascinations of a young, and as he thought, persecuted relative. The mistake of his first introduction, and the subsequent mystery in which he had involved himself, assisted by their novelty, to feed an attachment his generous mind conceived to be meritorious. I do not say his passion would have languished, had every thing succeeded to his wish, but the opposition from his own family and Lady Ann served greatly to inflame it; and the seclusion which followed his last decisive interview, was the determination of a relaxed mind, whose energies were suffered to lie dormant, till again roused by the recital of a sister's injuries. Revenge now rivalled love in the bosom of Moseley, and their united influence provoked the scene in which our heroine bore so painful a part at

St. James's. The duel immediately followed; and the tenderness and attention of his sister, whilst watching the bed of sickness, had done more towards conquering an unrequited passion than the reasoning of Lady Ann, or the violence of Lady Mountcastle.

Several weeks were subsequently devoted to a pleasureable tour, during which, his manners and disposition had insensibly resumed their former tone; nor, until the meeting with Fanny, at Blenheim, had he indulged in any sudden starts of passion. But the hated name of Corbett, pronounced, as he thought, with tenderness,—a name he could never hear with composure, since it was associated with the wrongs of a sister,—roused both his anger and his pride, and tended more effectually to subdue an attachment, unsanctioned by hope, than any circumstance which probably could have happened.

Fanny, on her return to Newland, found letters from Lady Ann, Miss Cavendish, and her guardian. The latter had con-

ducted the ladies to Tremorne, after seeing the remains of Mr. O'Brien deposited, by his own desire, in the Cathedral church of Chester, and would be in Oxfordshire the day following. Miss Fitz-York's intended departure was not publicly announced till after dinner; though a presentiment of what the letters might contain had previously thrown a gloom over the countenance of Leslie. But the servants were no sooner withdrawn than her Grace spoke with regret of the loss they should sustain, and concluded with a hope, "that if Miss Fitz-York had received as much pleasure as she had communicated, she would not only honour them with another visit, but make so fair a report, that Lady Ann might be tempted to try the air of Oxfordshire."

"My dancing days are over," said the Duke. "Since Miss Fitz-York deserts me, I shall never seek another partner."

"She only deserts you for a season," replied Fanny. "Another year, since I am permitted to hope for a renewal of the

happiness I have enjoyed, I trust my dear mother will witness my triumph, in being preferred to so many others more deserving."

"I shall beat a march at the same time," said Mrs. Bloomfield, "for my route is also come. And though Sir Lawrence and Mr. Lillyman may grieve to lose their monitor, they may rest assured, I shall renew my admonitions whenever we meet, until I have perfected the herculean labour of a reform. I know the promise will be to them consoling, and, on that ground, I care not what sacrifice I make of time or patience."

The two gentlemen looked foolish, but said nothing. A variety of contrary feelings prohibited general conversation; and at an early hour the dining-room was deserted. Sir Herbert selected our heroine for the companion of his walk, and hoped she and her guardian would not think of a separate conveyance, since he meant to visit Devonshire at the time proposed.

"I can have no other objection," she re-

plied, " to your plan than the very high style in which you travel. Your carriage is delightful for an airing, but, for a long journey, there is both comfort and safety in a post-chaise, and that I am sure my guardian would much prefer."

" Be it so," said Sir Herbert. " My travelling chaise shall be at the door, whenever you please to order it. And now, this business being settled so much to my satisfaction, I will hasten to expedite it, for I see another petitioner waiting for an audience, and I hope he will be as successful as your grateful Huntley."

Leslie was indeed hovering within sight, and joined Fanny before she recovered from the confusion Sir Herbert's last words occasioned. " Do I interrupt you?" he inquired.

" By no means."

" I ventured not to approach before, fearing to intrude upon those moments devoted to mutual confidence and secrecy."

" 'Tis painful to me to have any secrets

from my friends. But the business at which you hint is of so delicate a nature, and involves so many people——"

"More than your own family?—Pardon me.—I meant to be attentive, not curious."

"My own family are——" At this moment a loud laugh, so near that it startled them, betrayed the approach of company; and, in the next instant, all the younger part of the family stood before them. Leslie attempted not to conceal his disappointment, and Fanny's endeavour was totally unsuccessful. But hearing Sir Lawrence, in an audible whisper to Philippa, mention the cruelty of interrupting *the lovers*, at the same time making a move to continue their walk, she took hold of Sidney's arm and joined them. Philippa invited Leslie to do the same; but, without answering, he glided into another avenue.

"Poor Leslie looks as miserable as though he was going to confession," said Lillyman.

"The confession is over, if I have any

skill," observed Sir Lawrence. "We only interrupted the absolution."

"Were they sins of omission or commission, Miss Fitz-York?" asked little Auburn; for, when under no controul, they could all be witty in their own way. Fanny, to avoid answering such impertinence, conversed with Lady Sidney, and pretended not to hear them, though not one syllable was lost.

"I think I can answer that question," said Philippa. "They were acts, I will not call them by so gross a name as sins, of *commission;* not against the peerless Fanny, though she would have absolved him if they had, but against one, whose long-established claims set art and contrivance at defiance."

"The divine Philippa speaks in riddles," cried Lillyman.

"But easily solved," replied she, "by those whom it may concern."

Fanny could have cried with vexation; but, the triumph such an act of weakness would have afforded her adversary check-

ed her tears in their passage. 'Tis true she might have retaliated; but there was something so unlady-like in a war of words, such bitter ones at least, as would have occurred on the present occasion, that she thought it most prudent to swallow her resentment, and stifle the angry passions just ready to blaze forth. This was the second time she had been accused of art; the *contrivance* she supposed alluded to L dy Ann; but, as no art or contrivance had been in the contemplation of either, no disappointment could arise from their failure; and she endeavoured to think with composure of the union of Leslie and Philippa, since it was impossible she would talk, in so public a manner, of her long-established claims, unless they were indeed indisputable. Sometimes she fancied Leslie wished it otherwise; but, as it was doubtless a family arrangement, and had formerly his full sanction, honour required its fulfilment: " and, heaven forbid," she exclaimed, " that I should tempt him to a breach of that!" She now re-

gretted the heedlessness with which she had slighted Philippa's former warning. It would have been much easier then, she conceived, to conquer her fatal prepossession,—since Leslie's own behaviour fully authorized the distance and reserve of her's, —"and had I acted," thought she, "with a due regard to my own honour and happiness, that distance and reserve would have continued towards the affianced husband of another. Instead of which, I foolishly depended upon my own strength, and the conscious rectitude of my intentions; and, the consequences are, what vanity and self-conceit deserve."

Before they separated for the night, Leslie asked our heroine if she should walk before breakfast? To which she replied, rather formally, in the negative; and, the moment that meal was over, retired to her own room, where she busily employed herself until Mr. Strictland sent up his name. Quick as lightning she flew to receive him; and, hearing the Duke was alone, begged leave to introduce her guardian.

Nothing could be more polite or less formal than his reception: they were joined by her Grace the moment she heard of his arrival, and amid friendly inquiries and familiar communication, time slipped imperceptibly away.

In the evening, Fanny took her guardian's arm, and, under pretence of shewing the beauties of Newland, never left him for a moment. 'Tis true, Leslie was of their party, but this gave him no opportunity of renewing the conversation so despitefully interrupted at their last interview; and, when he requested Mr. Strictland to remain at least another day, she opposed it with an earnestness, that both surprised and mortified him. "I am sorry," he replied, "that we have so entirely failed in rendering Newland agreeable, that Miss Fitz-York cannot bear to remain a few short hours longer. Such impatience must give Mr. Strictland a very mean idea either of our powers or our wish to please."

"Indeed, my dear ward," said the good

man, "I cannot speak favourably of your gratitude or politeness; though, till this moment, I would have stood forth the champion of both."

"Forgive me, Mr. Talbot," she replied, deeply blushing, "I am indeed truly grateful for the unmerited attention I have received. But, I have the most powerful reasons for wishing to reach Tremorne as soon as possible,—reasons which I think you would approve, if you were aware of their magnitude."

"I am silenced," said Leslie. "I have had too much reason to admire the propriety of Miss Fitz-York's conduct to doubt it in any instance."

Sir Herbert now joined them with intelligence that his travelling carriage was arrived, and waited Miss Fitz-York's orders. Leslie endeavoured to smother a sigh, the meaning of which was fully understood by the sympathizing Baronet; and, drawing Mr. Strictland aside, under pretence of consulting him about their journey, Leslie

said, addressing our heroine, "can you pardon my petulance? I certainly had no right to be offended at your hasty determination; but, the cruel interruption of yesterday—the—I could almost think—pointed manner in which you have since avoided me, and my extreme anxiety to hear the conclusion of a sentence you were so sweetly confiding, made me forget that other friends are impatiently expecting you, and that my request was selfish and ill-timed."

"The interruption you seem to lament was to me most opportune; since I was led inadvertently into a forbidden subject, —a subject in which you *could* have no interest——"

"No interest! Do you then think me entirely the creature of curiosity, and that I could be led by so unworthy a motive to creep into your confidence?"

"I think your motives generally proper, and there is nothing to an ingenuous mind more painful than partial communication,

Mine, yesterday, could not have amounted to that, without injuring my own character and those immediately concerned."

"This leads directly to the point at which we left off. My question was, are more than your own family concerned? You were then, I flatter myself, giving me direct information; would it be painful or improper to answer me now?"

"Certainly not. My own family——"

"Cannot love you more than we do," said the Duke, tapping her shoulder. "Her Grace and I feel ourselves neglected, and I am sent to tell you so. Leslie, Philippa has been inquiring for you in no very conciliating accents. If you have been guilty of any breach of politeness towards the high-mettled maiden, the sooner you make it up the better, for she is seldom injured with impunity."

Leslie's look expressed no sorrow, but disturbance and vexation were plainly legible; and these confirmed Fanny's conjecture respecting his engagement. However willingly he had formerly worn Philippa's

chains, she was convinced they now fretted and galled him; and, the impossibility of throwing them off seemed little less painful to himself than, judging from the Duke's manner, it was to his Grace. When they entered the room, Philippa said, "Leslie, you are never where you ought to be."

"I conceive, Miss Heathcote," replied he, piqued by her words, "I *ought* to be, for the present, at least, where inclination points. I know of no immediate tie that should prevent me."

"I am sure," answered Philippa, in softened accents, "*I* don't wish to prevent you; but, I wanted you for something so particular, — something that would have given you such pleasure,—unless, indeed, you are altered more than I wish to suppose——"

"Leslie can never alter in his sentiments towards you, my dear," said the Duchess, wishing to soften the asperity of his manner. "But, don't worry him to-night; he is reflecting, if I may judge by my own

feelings, on the breach to-morrow will make in our society. I have been using all my influence to prevail for another day, but Mr. Strictland is inflexible."

"I have told your Grace the reason," answered Mr. Strictland; "and, I am sure you are too affectionate a mother not to enter into all Lady Ann's feelings. This is the first time my excellent friend was ever separated from her idol; and, now the necessity has ceased, every hour of privation will appear an age."

"I doubt it not," said Leslie, in a voice inaudible to all but Fanny. "Who, that had the choice, would wish ever to be separated from her?"

"Come," cried the Duke, "let us not give way to despondency, because we cannot be indulged in all our desires. Lady Ann's privation has been our happiness; and, now we are called upon to suffer in turn, let it be with a cheerful hope of another joyful meeting. Leslie, lead Miss Fitz-York to the music-room. This being

her last evening, we cannot allow her to be idle."

Leslie flew to obey; and said, in a low voice, as they proceeded, "am I always to be the victim of disappointment? Is the eagerly-desired sentence never to be concluded?"

"I cannot conceive," replied Fanny, "what satisfaction the knowledge of so unimportant a matter could convey. It leads to no elucidation of the mystery."

"Still you think me governed wholly by curiosity," said Leslie.

"Is it an unnatural conclusion?" asked our heroine, with a smile.

"It is not fair to weigh words without taking motives into the scale, for by them are the actions of rational creatures judged; and, if mine do not stand the test, then report me to Lady Ann as the most curious coxcomb, the most prying puppy, that ever disgraced your acquaintance."

Lady Ann had given strict orders that they should commence their journey early,

and rest during the oppressive heat of mid-day. Accordingly, the travellers,—except Mrs. Bloomfield, whose route being different, and who was withal not fond of early rising, had ordered her carriage after breakfast,—took an affectionate and polite leave of the family before they retired for the night. But, Fanny, to whom Leslie had declared his intention of seeing her in the morning, had so arranged matters with her guardian and Sir Herbert, that every thing was ordered to be in readiness by five, instead of six o'clock.

Taking leave, to every mind of sensibility, is a painful ceremony, and useless as painful. The present, all things considered, was perhaps more acute than any our heroine had before experienced; nor could the recollection of the adored parent she was flying to embrace soften its pungency. Her attachment to Leslie was founded on principles the most durable, and not less ardent or enthusiastic, for being a first love. Pride and justice had made several attempts to eradicate it, and, in the virtu-

ous bosom of Fanny, the latter was a powerful incentive. But Leslie, resisting all her efforts, kept firm possession of her thoughts, and Philippa's supposed claims were, in their moments of confidence, forgotten. Thus situated, she found there was no safety but in flight, no chance of recovered peace, but by absence and a total change of scene.

Our heroine passed the hours of night in forming resolutions and laying plans for her future conduct. To sleep under these impressions was impossible. As soon as day appeared she arose, and having prepared every thing for her departure, walked into the garden, hoping to dissipate the effects of a wakeful night by the refreshing and salubrious breezes of an autumnal morning. This had, in some measure, the desired effect, and she had argued herself into the necessity of a separation, when the stable clock told five. This was her own appointed hour, yet she could not help regretting the change. What would Leslie think, when, instead of meeting her at an

early breakfast, he found his politeness repaid by flight, and his hospitable attention thrown away upon an ingrate? Still she lingered in the garden. Perhaps her guardian and Sir Herbert were not yet risen, and it would be pity to disturb them. This last thought had scarcely occurred, when the Baronet appeared from the house with information that every thing was ready, and Mr. Strictland waiting for her. There was no resisting this appeal. They proceeded slowly, and without speaking, to the chaise, for Sir Herbert had too much delicacy and feeling to notice the heaviness of her eyes, and the dejection of her countenance, and too much discernment not to know precisely the cause.

"Come, my love," said Mr. Strictland, smiling, "you are more ready to make an appointment than to keep it. Perhaps you regret the alteration of the hour, if so, give your orders and the horses shall be remanded."

"Do you indeed think me so fickle?"

asked Fanny. "My motive for the request still remains in force."

"May we be allowed to know your motive?" inquired her guardian. "For, I declare I can see no rational one for calling us up an hour sooner than was necessary, and hurrying us away without breakfast."

Fanny was at a loss for a reply. To say the change arose from a wish to avoid Leslie would have appeared both capricious and ungrateful; and, to invent a falsehood was repugnant to her nature. Sir Herbert, seeing her embarrassment, good-humouredly replied, "Miss Fitz-York named five o'clock at my request. When you are in love, my dear Sir, you will make allowance for a lover's impatience. Every hour appears an age until I reach Tremorne; and, as we are prohibited from travelling under a vertical sun, I conceived this arrangement would, in some measure, make up lost time."

Fanny had on various occasions felt grateful for Sir Herbert's interference, and

never more so than at the present crisis. She looked her thanks,—the postillions cracked their whips,—and, in a few minutes, Newland-Abbey was lost amidst the surrounding woods.

CHAP. II.

BENEVOLENCE REWARDED,—THE KING'S BENCH,—AN ARRIVAL,—AND A HUMOURIST'S WILL.

By the time our travellers have crossed Wiltshire, we may probably overtake them; meantime it may not be amiss to inquire after Frederick Leigh and his little wife. If we have unfortunately failed in creating an interest for them, in the bosom of our readers, they will do well to pass over a few pages, but we hope better things from our own ingenuity and their discernment.

The morning subsequent to Mary's introduction into the house of our worthy banker, hearing she was perfectly recovered, and waiting to pay her respects, Mr. Strictland accompanied Frederick into the

housekeeper's room, and, after the most friendly inquiries, was made acquainted with those particulars of which our reader is in possession. "Your kind inquiry after my wife," continued Frederick, "when I was myself incapable of flying to her assistance, led the cruel woman, where we lodged, to load her with additional insult; but we have once more miraculously met, and nothing but death shall again part us."

Mr. Strictland briefly related to whom Frederick owed his origin, and likewise informed him that one thousand pounds, with several years interest, were due to him from the will of his late father. "This," he added, "will establish you comfortably in the business for which you were designed; and I am authorised by Lady Ann Fitz-York to say, that, if you are careful and industrious, further assistance, if necessary, shall not be wanting."

Frederick and Mary poured forth their acknowledgments, but the latter expressed a decided opposition to settling in London.

"We have experienced nothing but misery," she said, "since we came here; let us retire to some country town, no matter how distant, so we escape the wickedness and deception which prevail in this place." Mr. Strictland having consulted Lady Ann upon the subject, it was finally agreed that the young couple should proceed immediately to the Tower of Tremorne, from whence Frederick could visit the neighbouring towns, and fix upon the one best calculated to answer his purpose. This point settled, her Ladyship presented them with fifty pounds, to replenish their wardrobe; and Frederick, elated with the prospect of a virtuous and reputable establishment, conducted his wife to the house of her more than mother, the good, the benevolent Mrs. Carter. The good woman's joy, at seeing her poor wanderer restored to the arms of an affectionate husband, could scarcely be exceeded by what Mary herself felt on the blessed occasion. The shop door was closed, "for I sell no cabbages," said she, "on this day of jubilee;

so sit down, my dear children, make yourselves as comfortable as I am happy, and we need not envy the Lord Mayor in his state coach." Frederick, however, left them to an unreserved communication; and, before the day closed, it was finally agreed that Mrs. Carter should follow them into Devonshire, as soon as they had settled their place of abode, and be to Mary, mother, friend, and servant.

Preparations were quickly made, but, before their departure, Frederick's wife expressed an earnest desire to thank the benevolent bricklayer, but for whose bounty she might have perished, in the midst of a city famed for its opulence and charitable institutions. The only possible mode of discovering him, Frederick conceived, would be to place themselves, at an early hour, on Westminster-bridge, where, if his employment lay in the same quarter, there could be little doubt of seeing him pass. Accordingly, at five o'clock, the grateful couple were stationed on the bridge, and anxiously did Mary examine

every countenance. Numbers of different mechanics passed to and fro, but still no one appeared whose face she could identify; and they were leisurely retracing their steps, when the very man, his implements of masonry thrown across his shoulder, just as he appeared in the hour of her distress, come whistling along, without appearing to have one care or uneasiness upon his mind.

"How enviable is the state of this man!" thought Frederick. "He rises with the sun to his labour,—exercise bestows health and appetite,—and unbroken slumbers wait upon his pillow. What would the rich and great give for one such day of unalloyed happiness,—one such night of refreshing repose?"

Mary had by this time stopped the man, and, looking earnestly in his face, whilst the tear of remembrance rushed into her eye, "Yes!" she cried, "this is the benevolent creature whose pitying hand provided food and shelter for one who otherwise might have perished! This is the

man, my Frederick, who perhaps robbed himself of a day's comfort to give bread to a forlorn stranger!"

"Poor lady!" said the mechanic, looking at Frederick; "How she rambles! Shall I run for a coach, Sir? or, perhaps you bring her out, to take the air thus early, to avoid observation."

"I see your error, friend," replied Frederick; "but the lady is of sound mind, and speaks the words of sense and reason."

"Indeed!" said the man. "And how have I deserved so much praise? Yet, now I look again, it must be she! The very lady who dropped a Bank note into the river one morning, last winter, and kindly accepted a shilling from the hands of a poor bricklayer."

"That shilling, my kind friend," replied Mary, "saved me from misery incalculable; and my husband is come to return the pecuniary part of the obligation twenty fold." Frederick now placed a pound note in the hands of the labourer. "The debt is cancelled," continued she,

"but my gratitude will ever remain a monument of your liberality."

"Your name, friend?" said Frederick.

"Jacob Gilbert, your honour. And if I might make so bold, I should like to tell my poor wife,—now in the straw,—who sent her this note to buy her comforts."

"That is for your own separate use," said Frederick. "But take this," giving another, "and say 'tis a grateful offering from Mary Leigh to the wife of Jacob Gilbert."

Jacob would have refused the latter note, "it looked so like begging," he said. But, finding he should give offence, he chuckled out his thanks, and drawing the back of his hand across his eyes, as he ejaculated a fervent "God bless you both!" hastened to his work.

"Oh!" said Mary, when he was gone, "what different feelings agitated my mind when last I parted from that honest man on this spot! Then, the commonest beggar in the street excited my envy, for they know the worst that can befall them, and

how to provide against it. But I knew not, when the charitable bricklayer's shilling was gone, where to procure another, or how to find a place of shelter for my aching limbs. You, my Frederick, had unaccountably disappeared, and on no other being in existence had I the smallest claim. But now I am enabled, through the mercy of providence, to repay my obligation with interest,—I have a comfortable prospect in future,—and more,—much more than all this, the husband of my heart is restored to me, virtuous as though he had never erred, and dearer, if possible, since I experienced the misery of a separation."

Every thing being adjusted for leaving town on the following day, Lady Ann was giving them much good advice and instruction regarding their future proceedings, when Mr. Gaskell was announced, and made his appearance with a countenance pale and agitated. Her Ladyship, dismissing her companions, inquired with alarm into the cause. When he informed

her that his son was a prisoner in the King's Bench, and that Grace, his youngest daughter, had eloped with a serjeant. "Your Ladyship," he continued, "was doubtless prepared, by my last letter, for a separation from my rebellious family. That event took place soon afterwards, by the consent of all parties; and Mrs. Gaskell retired, with the girls, upon a liberal allowance, to Plymouth, not choosing any longer, as they said, to be buried alive. My home appeared a little heaven, after the departure of spirits so rude and ungenial; and the only uneasiness I experienced, was a demand from Mr. Gossip, the apothecary, for a hundred pounds lent to my wife. This might, I feared, be the forerunner of many other debts, though I conceived my allowance for household expenses would have prevented the necessity of borrowing. My fears, however, on that head, I believe were vain, and I had again composed my mind to study and retirement, when a letter, from Mrs. Gaskell, filled with vulgar complaint, and bitter invective, informed

me of her youngest daughter's disgrace, and another, by the same post, dated King's Bench, announced Walter's incarceration.

The girl has chosen her own fate, and must abide the consequences. Whenever her husband calls upon me, I shall give him five hundred pounds, all the fortune she must expect, until I see a change, and of that I am not very sanguine, considering her education, and the example she has had. Walter's situation has brought me to town; and if, upon examination, I find the debt lawfully and honourably contracted, it shall be paid, because tradesmen have no right to suffer from other's imprudence. But it must be with a proviso, otherwise my whole fortune would scarcely suffice, to supply the extravagance and thoughtless expenditure of a weak and dissipated boy.

If Mr. Strictland be at leisure, I should wish him to accompany me, for the usages of the King's Bench are quite new to me,

and ignorance may perhaps lead to inconvenience.

Lady Ann sincerely sympathised in her worthy neighbour's misfortunes, and regretted Mr. Strictland's absence. "But Frederick Leigh," she added, "will accompany you, and though not so capable of advising, he possesses a great deal of assiduity, and may be useful."

Mr. Gaskell, accompanied by Frederick, proceeded to the place which encircles more real misery than any spot of the same dimensions in the kingdom. After they had passed the different doors, the motley group which lined the court rivetted Mr. Gaskell's attention. Men, fashionably attired, whose countenances exhibited no trace of care, were contrasted with squalid rags, and faces pinched by famine and disease. Some walked with folded arms, and eyes bent upon the ground; whilst others, loud in boisterous mirth, were amusing themselves with variety of games, and puerile pursuits. But the most conspicuous objects were a female, dressed in

the extravagance of fashion, leaning on the arm of an officer, whose gestures, as far as they could be distinguished in the distance, were lively and animated.

Mr. Gaskell made these observations as they walked towards the dashing pair; when a loud laugh, in the well-known tones of Walter, first convinced him that the officer was indeed his son; and a nearer survey presented the belle of fashion in the disgusting character of his sister-in-law, the *ci-devant* Mrs. Stokes.

Frederick no sooner recognized his mother, in the highly-rouged, wantonly-dressed female than a sickness came over his senses, and, but for the supporting arm of Mr. Gaskell, he must have sunk upon the earth. Mrs. Stokes, for by that name she still went, advanced, with as much easy unconcern, as though she had been receiving company in the Major's drawing-room. "I don't welcome you to this place, brother Gaskell," said she, "because the Bench is not a residence people would prefer; but, I assure you, we have very good

society,—have not we, Walter? and by no means destitute of amusement. At any rate, 'tis infinitely preferable to Tremorne. How are my sister and the girls? Have you brought them to town?"

Levity and want of feeling were so conspicuous in her words and manner, that Mr. Gaskell turned away in disgust; and, taking Walter aside, Frederick found himself for the first time, since he knew good from evil, alone with the author of his being. I say alone, for, though surrounded by numbers, no one was near enough to observe or hear their conversation. "Well, young man," said Mrs. Stokes, "I suppose you are come to liberate me. You have got a thousand pounds, I understand, by your father's will, and your first duty is to release your mother."

"Where was that mother's duty, when she abandoned her infant,—left it to perish amongst strangers? That act severed the link which united us, and the virtuous man who succoured my helplessness, became to me father,—mother,—and kindred.

He further bound me to him, by giving me his daughter, and in her,—since death has cruelly robbed us of her parent,—my first, my only duty centres."

"Mighty well, Sir. Then you owe nothing to me?"

"Nothing, that bears in any degree upon love or duty. The compassion due to your sex and situation, you may command, but——"

"Compassion! I scorn it. I am not yet reduced to seek compassion, and will not be indebted for it to a boy. If you are inclined to pay five hundred pounds to release me from the fangs of a rascally Jew, 'tis well; if not, leave me as you found me, and retire with the consolation that you *could* have saved a parent, but *would* not."

"I would save any woman to the extent of my ability, but what you ask is much beyond it. If the sacrifice of one hundred pounds would have redeemed you, heaven knows, I would cheerfully have bestowed it; but to rob my wife, and probably an in-

creasing family, of half their patrimony at one blow, cannot be thought of for a moment. Neither would Mr. Strictland and Lady Fitz-York hear of such an alienation. Might not Mr. Gaskell apply to Major Stokes? A man of his property will not suffer his wife to languish in a prison, for a sum to him so inconsiderable."

"Aye! You do well to shift the load from your own shoulders. You cannot be so ignorant as not to know that his *lawful wife* could never be a prisoner for debt. But leave me. Here comes one who will protect me at all hazards. And, harkee! Presume not to mention my name before that starched piece of uprightness, Lady Ann Fitz-York, her simpering daughter, or the formal prude Rose Cavendish. They are people I utterly abhor, and would rather all the world knew of my disgrace than that detested family."

A fashionable-looking middle-aged man now made his appearance, whose arm Mrs. Stokes familiarly seized, and walked away. Frederick, now left alone, ruminated on

the scene which had just passed, and the result was, that he would be guided implicitly by Mr. Strictland. As he stood viewing the athletic exercises of the young and healthy, he was much struck with the appearance of a female, coarsely and very meanly habited; but her rags were clean, and there was altogether an air of neatness, —I had almost said comfort,—about her, that was respectable, although want glared in her eye, and care wrinkled her visage. She looked wistfully at Frederick, but made no motion to approach; and, not knowing how to introduce a conversation, he passed on. He had not proceeded many paces, however, before his heart smote him. The misery himself and his Mary had suffered, from the gnawings of hunger, rushed to his memory; and, taking a guinea from his pocket, he turned back, pressed it into her hand, and, without speaking, precipitately withdrew.

It is not our intention to trace the wretchedness of this poor creature to its source; nor indeed to touch upon it at all.

There are so many similar objects to be met with, in these monuments of *national disgrace*, that the mind disposed to inquiry may have his feelings lacerated to the extent of human bearing; and those who are callous to the quantity of misery collected in the different jails of this kingdom would feel no sympathy towards an individual, however bitter her lot. All we shall remark, therefore, is, that she purchased a plentiful meal, and bedewed it with the tear of thankfulness.

Frederick soon found Mr. Gaskell, and, during their walk to the city, he learnt that Walter was imprisoned at the suit of his tailor, "though I have twice," added he, "advanced money to pay this same account. There are likewise, I understand, detainers from a horse-dealer, and a tavern-keeper; but these accounts, as my son is under age, I mean to litigate. What is proper and reasonable shall be honourably paid; but I know such people frequently take unfair advantages of the inexperienced, and to expose them is a duty I owe both

to myself and society. As to that wretched woman with whom we have both the misfortune to be connected, she is imprisoned for some nefarious transactions with a Jew; and, since her confinement, has accepted the protection,—the modern term for an illicit intercourse,—of a profligate man of quality, who lives sumptuously in prison, at the expense of his creditors; and, to complete his infamy, can see with unconcern scores of wretched objects starving around him, whilst he, and the Major's quondam wife, sit comfortably down to two courses and a desert."

Frederick hearing this dreadful account of his mother's added delinqueney, thought all interference, for the present at least, would be vain; and left town, at the time appointed, with his beloved Mary. Lady Ann favoured him with a letter to the Reverend Mr. Cavendish, requesting his good offices, in properly fixing and recommending him in the way of his business; and, fortunately there was an opening for him in a neighbouring town, through the

demise of a liquor-merchant, whose stock in trade was to be disposed of at a fair valuation. This was made-over to him, upon advantageous terms, and, within a fortnight, he was established with every appearance of success. Mrs Carter formed a principle feature in their little household; and, being comfortably settled, happiness once more reigned in the bosoms of Frederick and Mary.

Mr. Gaskell, by the aid of Mr. Strictland's solicitor, gave freedom to his son, under the most solemn promises of abstaining from debt in future. But, knowing how little his word was to be depended upon, he took care, both for his own, and for the sake of other fathers, who might be tormented like himself, to have the case recorded in all the papers, thereby insuring himself from further trouble, by the certainty that no one would be weak enough to trust the son of a man so determined.

A fortnight passed over, after his return into Devonshire, without hearing from any part of his family. At length an ill-written

letter arrived, from his new son-in-law, dated Plymouth, hoping to be received into favour, and, through Mr. Gaskell's means, promoted in his profession. This impudent request being treated with silent contempt, another week produced a second epistle, signed Grace Taylor, begging her *dear papa* would not cast off his *dutiful daughter*, but allow them something to begin the world, as his children.

Wishing to put an end, now and for ever, to the hypocritical effusions of Grace's pen, he answered, that five hundred pounds, the whole of the fortune she must ever expect, were lodged, for her use, in the hands of his banker, at Exeter; that since her husband was ambitious of being an officer, he could not do better than appropriate part of the sum to that purpose. "Not that I wish it," he added, "for, since you have married a serjeant, no purchase of rank can transfer him into a gentleman." This letter mortified the new married couple, but the money acted as a salvo. It was a mine of wealth to the serjeant, who

had never before been in possession of ten pounds at any given time, and did more towards reconciling Mamma and Priscilla than years of penitence would have done. They now assisted the consultations of Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, and finally agreed that the family honour loudly demanded a commission. "As to your father's observation," said Mrs. Gaskell, "'tis both silly and untrue. An officer is a gentleman, all the world over, and some of our first commanders have arisen from a lower rank than Mr. Taylor's."

Accordingly, he procured an exchange with no very serious diminution of their property; and "*Ensign Taylor's lady!*" was vociferated from the box-lobby, with as much regard to etiquette as though he had been a General. Priscilla's, — more properly speaking, Mrs. Smith's bosom, rankled with envy, at the consequence her sister had acquired; for, besides being an officer's lady, than which nothing she conceived could be more honourable, her husband was the handsomest man in the

regiment. Illiterate and low-bred, certainly, but a little time amongst his superiors would rectify the latter, and many of his brethren were as uneducated as himself. She, on the contrary, was a wife without a husband. The man she had married, was not only as low in birth, and much beneath him in degree, but a person on whose head a price was fixed,—an advertised culprit,—so minutely described, that to appear in public was certain destruction. Could she have escaped disgrace, the transportation or even death of the man she had vowed to love and honour would have been tidings of no disagreeable import, for neither affection nor esteem presided at the wedding; and the allurements of ambition vanished, almost as soon as the ceremony they produced was over. But to be the widow of a transport,—or of a man who had finished his career at the gallows,—was courting notoriety in a way few people would prefer. Smith frequently favoured her with remembrances, but their purport being invariably a demand for mo-

ney, which, to keep him at a distance, was never refused, unless circumstances made a remittance impossible, rendered the square-folded ill-directed letters any thing but welcome; and as the answers were ordered to a fictitious address, and never directed twice to the same place, his way of life and pursuits were profoundly mysterious.'

Having thus brought the different incidents connected with our history down to the present time, and settled Frederick and his little establishment within a pleasant walk of Tremorne, we shall return to the young and lively heiress, who is at this moment stepping out of the chaise, at Salisbury, where her friends propose passing the night.

A carriage at the door of an inn is sure to attract general attention. Every street passenger is as anxious to watch the descent of the company, as though he expected to see the countenance of some particular friend; and those who occupy the different apartments of the hotel, flock to

the windows, infected by similar curiosity. Amongst the latter was Colonel Parke. He saw an elderly gentleman first descend, and afterwards give his hand to a female, youthful as Hebe, and lovely as one of the graces. When she reached the ground, she looked full in the face of her guardian, with one of those bewitching smiles, which convinced the Colonel, if he before had any doubt, that this fascinating object could be no other than his partner in the dance,—the very Miss Fitz-York whom chance had introduced him to at Burford.

He was too anxious to catch her eye to observe the third passenger; and they entered the house, ere he could decide whether so slight an acquaintance would warrant the freedom of sending in his name. Had he beheld Fanny with the indifference of a common acquaintance, the matter would have been decided instantly,—for, where there is nothing to risk, there are few obstacles to encounter,—but the man who had faced his country's enemies, in different quarters of the globe, was meta-

morphosed, by the blue eyes of our heroine, into the veriest coward that ever sighed at the feet of a fair lady.

Whilst he still remained at the window, buried in cogitation, Sir Herbert's valet returned from the carriage with Fanny's parasol, and knowing Colonel Parke, as an acquaintance of his master's, made a respectful bow. The Colonel started from his reverie, at a sight so welcome,—for the man must be the fore-runner of the master, —and, leaning out of the window, he asked Richard where Sir Herbert was?

"In the house, your honour. We are just arrived."

"Was your master a party in that carriage?"

"Yes, Colonel; the carriage *is* my master's. We are on the rode to Devonshire, with Miss Fitz-York and her guardian."*

"Say a gentleman wishes to see Sir Herbert. You need not mention my name."

Away flew the man, and out came the master. The meeting was mutually plea-

sant; and, as there could be no intrusion, sanctioned by one of their own party, he followed the lead of Sir Herbert, and was graciously received. Fanny poured out the coffee, and did the honours of the tea-table with that graceful unaffected ease, so captivating to the lovers of simple nature; whilst the Colonel referred to the evening on which he had been so happy. "To you, Herbert," he added, "I owe both my first and second introduction to Miss Fitz-York: could I flatter myself that there would be a passport to her friends, to permit my future visits, I should be ready to turn Catholic, and worship you as my tutelary saint."

"Lady Ann Fitz-York," said Fanny, "is so partial to Sir Herbert Huntley, that any friends of his will be received at the Tower, during the period of his own visit."

"You understand from this, Colonel," observed Mr. Strictland, "that the Tower of Tremorne is sometimes unapproachable. What think you of joining our forces now?

'Tis at present accessible, but how long it may continue so, entirely depends upon chance, and the discretion of the Lady Governess, that delays may be dangerous."

"Will there be any chance of an entry within four-and-twenty hours after the gates are closed upon you?" inquired the Colonel, in the same strain of pleasantry. "If so, I shall not fail to salute the garrison, on the second day from this. In what direction, and how distant from Exeter?"

"Fifteen miles N. N. W." replied Mr. Strictland. "On the second day from this the gates shall be thrown open, and Colonel Parke received with military honours. Have I pledged myself too far, Fanny?"

"My mother knows your discretion too well, my dear Sir, not to rely upon it most implicitly."

The evening glided away imperceptibly, and Colonel Parke employed the best part of the night in anticipating the result of

his permitted visit. He had all his life been a decided enemy to procrastination, and, in an affair so near his heart, resolved no time should be lost in ascertaining its future fate. Of the Baronet he felt no dread; there was too much ease in their behaviour,—their friendship was too familiar and obvious, to come under that description of sentiment called love. The youth of our heroine might, he conceived, have prevented a serious attachment; but, would not that circumstance militate against a man of eight-and-thirty? The thought made him uneasy. He had never before imagined his age could be any obstacle, because he had never before admired so mere a girl. His residence abroad had made him appear older than he really was; what chance then had he with a young lady of family, probably of fortune, and not eighteen?

These thoughts kept him awake, and he almost determined to keep out of the way of so dangerous a temptation; when a dream,—yes, dear reader,—a dream chan-

ged the current of his ideas: not that the Colonel was superstitious, or a believer in visions; but such delightful scenes occurred to his sleeping fancy, that he determined to realize them, if possible; or, at any rate, not to shrink like a coward from difficulties which might, after all, be imaginary.

The evening of this day Fanny was pressed to the bosom of her doating mother, and Rosette mingled tears of joy with her embraces; joy not less ardent from her being accompanied so unexpectedly by the lord of her affections. The moment her arrival was announced, the village bells struck up a merry peal; Mr. Gaskell and the Vicar, so we must in future call him, came to pay their respects; little *Pet danced* in his very best manner, and the Tower never witnessed a happier party. Fanny made eager inquiries after her little play-fellows, nor were Aunt Susy and Julia forgotten.

A deep crimson died the cheek of Rose, when the name of Julia was mentioned;

but her brother thanked the kind inquirer, and continued, with a sigh, "in a little time, my young friend, I hope all will be well. To you and Sir Herbert Huntley, the family owe obligations, never to be cancelled, since they are not confined to Julia's temporal welfare, but extensive as eternity. The poor girl appears deeply sensible of her past transgressions; and, when she has recovered her own esteem, that of her friends will not be withheld." Miss Cavendish had retired to the window, to conceal the mixture of shame and emotion which she could not controul. The good divine, advancing, took her hand, and continued, "your blushes, my virtuous, my inestimable sister, are the corruscations of a mind that feels acutely for the disgrace of a family hitherto without stain. I may and must feel for the criminality of one sister, but I have no hesitation in saying, that the other is my pride and boast, and will never dishonour the illustrious house which seeks her alliance. Receive her, Sir Herbert Huntley, from

the hands of a brother, who calls the most high God to witness the purity and disinterestedness of his motives; and solemnly vows, before the same omniscient Being, that if the smallest speck or flaw could be found in Rosette's moral character, he would declare it to her intended husband, with as much sincerity as he now proclaims her virtues."

There was something so grandly impressive,—so religiously sublime in the pious man's countenance, during this awful appeal, that tears dropped from every eye. His sister sobbed aloud, and, as Sir Herbert pressed the hand, so solemnly bestowed, he replied, "I receive your gift as a boon from heaven, and when I cease to cherish it, may all good men abandon me."

He then led her into the garden, and Mr. Cavendish apologized for throwing such a gloom over the meeting.

"I was the cause," said Fanny, "by unguardedly mentioning Julia. But, indeed, I feel a lively interest in her fate,

heightened, perhaps, by the accidental share I had in her restoration."

When the Baronet and Miss Cavendish returned, there was a placid serenity in her countenance,—a chastened pleasure in her eye, that spoke happiness and recovered peace; and every body had so much to say, either of inquiry or information, that Lady Ann forgot the hour, no one thought proper to remind her of it, and it was late when Mr. Gaskell and the Vicar took leave.

Before breakfast, our heroine and her friend, loaded with presents, walked to the Vicarage, and were hailed with shouts of joy by the children, whose growth and improvement were so conspicuous, that Fanny blushed at producing toys beneath the attention of the well-grown boy and girl now before her. But she quickly found her error. When young people see things for the first time, the most puerile objects receive an importance, which repeated contemplation would destroy. George and Georgiana were strangers to

the use of toys, except those Miss Fitz-York had aforetime presented; and, as they were in every respect different, though equally adapted to childhood, they appeared consequential, and derived a value equally delightful and important. Miss Susanna Simpkin bustled, and bridled, and simpered, and frowned, alternately; in short, there was something in her manner that would have expressed pleasure, if a contrary sentiment had not interfered. Fanny was too well acquainted with the irregularities of her temper to wonder much at its present inconsistency: but, unfortunately, inquiring after Julia, the storm burst forth. "Oh, Miss Fitz-York!" she exclaimed, "could you have thought it possible that a clergyman, — a minister of the Church of England, — could have introduced pollution into the house where I preside? I, who never suffered my chaste lips to be defiled by the touch of man,— whose eyes behold a professed wanton, for the first time, — and whose pure ears are strangers to the sounds of lasciviousness?

A pretty example she will prove to Georgiana Simpkin, and finely we have been talked of throughout the country! Do ask your mamma to speak to his reverence. He will mind her more than any body else, and I dare say she might persuade him to turn her out."

"Turn her out, madam!" said Fanny, in amazement. "Turn out his own sister! The sister of Rosette! that I am sure my mother will never do."

"Why, surely, Lady Ann cannot approve of his keeping her here, to the scandal of his cloth and the disgrace of his profession!"

"The scandal and disgrace, madam, would be in turning her out. His profession teaches repentance and forgiveness of sins; but, by discarding her, he would shut out all prospect of the one, and, by the same rule, all possibility of the other; and be, in fact, answerable for her misery here and hereafter."

Mr. Cavendish and Rose at that moment joined them. "I see," said the Vicar,

with a benevolent smile, "that Miss Simpkin has been upon the subject of grievances, which surely was not treating Miss Fitz-York with her usual politeness, at the first visit. Do you find the children much altered, my dear young friend?"

"Oh! the sweet little creatures," replied Fanny, "are improved beyond what I could have supposed possible. If you do not often indulge me with their company at the Tower, I shall be a very constant and a troublesome guest to Miss Simpkin."

"To her unremitting care," said the Vicar, "I owe much, and my boy and girl still more, which induces me to bear a degree of irritating contradiction upon one subject, that I once thought my nature could never have borne. That we differ in many points, I do not wonder, but we may surely differ and not disagree. I think the happiest moment of my life was that which restored Julia to my protecting roof; it had quite a contrary effect upon Miss Simpkin; but, if I overlook her more than indifference, and she make al-

lowance for the natural affection of a brother, I think we might come to a proper understanding, without the sacrifice of domestic peace."

Sir Herbert was seen coming down the walk, which prevented an effusion just rising to the chaste lips of the maiden. Whether the reader has suffered much loss from the suppression cannot be exactly ascertained; but, knowing the full extent of her argumentative powers, we rather conceive it to be a matter of congratulation than otherwise. The Baronet came with information that breakfast waited for the runaways,—that Mr. and Mrs. Leigh were arrived,—and that Lady Ann wished to see Mr. Cavendish as soon as convenient.

After the morning repast, her Ladyship retired with her two trusty and tried friends, Mr. Strictland and the Vicar, to her library, when the banker drew from his pocket the last will and testament of Mr. O'Brian,—copies of which he had forwarded to Lord Mountcastle, and to Ire-

land. The preamble contained reflections on some near relatives, but without naming them, who had insidiously succeeded in warping his mind, and instilling false notions of certain persons, whom he too late repented having discarded. It went on to say, that though he could not reward one party, without violating his oath, he could and would punish the other, by leaving the bulk of his property at the will of a stranger. He then proceeds in the regular way; "I give and bequeath to Maria Mountcastle, commonly called Lady Maria, the sum of fifteen thousand pounds; because she is less beloved by her parents than such a good girl ought to be. I give and bequeath to Rosette Cavendish, who, during my illness, has been unto me as a daughter, five thousand pounds, and my best diamond ring; each legacy to be paid within one year of my decease. To all my servants, without distinction, I give one hundred pounds and decent mourning. All the rest, residue, and remainder of my property, whatsoever, or wheresoever lying,

I give and bequeath to John Strictland, Esq. in trust for any deserving young woman he shall select, within twelve months after my death. In his choice I make no stipulations of poverty, but I would wish her to be well educated; rich or poor, handsome or ugly, she will be equally entitled to my inheritance; though, if I might venture any preference, it should be in favour of auburn hair and blue eyes. I further request John Strictland, Esq. will accept my gold repeating watch, my second best diamond ring, and my silver mounted pistols, on which are engraved my initials and crest, as a trifling remuneration for the trouble I am entailing upon him. A duplicate of this my last will and testament will be found in the possession of my solicitor, r. Boyd, of Lincoln's-Inn-fields."

"This testament, it appears," continued Mr. Strictland, "was executed before he left town; but, the following codicil, written with his own hand, was added, at Chester, after his accident, and is as follows:

"The above is the will of a humourist, dictated in perfect health, and under impressions of resentment. I am now lying on the bed of sickness, labouring under acute bodily pain, from which there is no probability of redemption, but by death; and to forgive others, as we hope ourselves to be forgiven, appears at this awful moment a precept so important, that I dare not disobey it. Alexander Lord Mountcastle, the son of my sister, Norah, and Dennis, Patrick, and Murtoch, sons of my brother, Hugh, have coveted my inheritance; and, to compass their mercenary ends, have spoken words of slander and untruth against the memory of a nephew I once loved as my son, and against his surviving family. Resentment for this undeserved slander dictated the will, by which I cut them off from any share of my property. But, for the reasons above named, I do repent me of the deed, and by this codicil do give and bequeath to my nephew, Alexander, and to my three other nephews, Dennis, Patrick, and Murtoch,

five thousand pounds each, as a proof of my reconciliation and forgiveness. Every thing before expressed I would have obey-ed to the very letter."

"What think you," said Lady Ann to Mr. Cavendish, after Mr. Strictland had finished, "of this extraordinary will? It evidently means my daughter to inherit. But, when it is known that I followed Mr. O'Brian to Chester, and remained with him in his last moments, will it not appear as though I had instigated the bequest?"

"Appearances, my dear madam," repli-ed the Vicar, "are no proof."

"True. But I would be, like Cæsar's wife, unsuspected. Lord Mountcastle, I understand, had great expectations from the old gentleman, and to be thus defeated will increase her Ladyship's rancour be-yond all bounds. I sincerely wish, for my own sake, the will had never been made; for, to be thought capable of influ-encing Mr. O'Brian will cause me more pain than any accession of fortune to my daughter will ever convey pleasure."

"My sister," said Mr. Cavendish, "must have been greatly astonished at the magnitude of his bequest."

"She is yet ignorant of it," replied her Ladyship. "I intend it for a *bonne bouche* on the day of her marriage."

"A thought has taken possession of my mind, since you mentioned Lady Mountcastle," said Mr. Strictland, "that I cannot help calling an omen."

"Of good, I hope," replied her Ladyship. "Pray inform me, at any rate."

"Should you be surprised, since my ward will be the presumed heiress, to receive overtures of reconciliation from Lady Mountcastle, involving proposals for Fanny?"

"I should indeed be surprised; but Lady Mountcastle will never so descend, you may rest assured. Mr. Cavendish, I know I have only to express my wish, that the contents of this paper may for the present be concealed. Fanny has been brought up with humble expectations, and that impression I wish to remain, for rea-

sons it is not at present necessary to mention."

During this conference, Sir Herbert was very pressing with his beloved to name an early day. Rosette, with that sincerity which marked her character, assured him, that she looked forward to their union, as to a period of the most perfect bliss this world can bestow; but insisted that Lady Huntley should previously be informed of every circumstance relative to Julia. "It must be for her Ladyship to determine afterwards," she contended, "whether I am to be received as a daughter, or rejected. I think, if your mother's character be truly represented, that rejection will not be my lot; but that,—bitterly as I should feel it,—would be happiness,—bliss, compared to the misery which must result from a circulation of the family disgrace, after I had put it out of her power to refuse me."

"Do not alarm yourself, my dear Rose, unnecessarily. 'Tis very improbable such a story should ever reach Lady Huntley."

"The bare possibility of such a thing, after our marriage, would render me wretched. To prevent that, write to your mother,—or see her,—that perhaps would be better,—tell her honestly and candidly every thing you know,—relate the bad and the good,—let us have nothing to reproach ourselves with, on the score of sincerity,—and we shall not be utterly miserable, though what we dread should happen."

"Not miserable!"

"No! Conscious integrity is a shield that will preserve us against the shafts of undeserved calamity. I see you are fearful of committing the story to Lady Huntley, and that makes me still more anxious for the communication. Shall my brother write to her Ladyship?"

"No! He would merely tell the circumstance, but I have too much at stake, not to urge arguments and reasons which cannot fail to counteract the ill you seem resolved on."

"We are both resolved, I hope, to act *properly*; and that is the way to *deserve*

success, though we cannot *command* it. Will you go or write?"

"Go, by all means. Colonel Parke will not think of staying more than one day, I should suppose; when he departs I shall accompany him, and know my fate at once."

Fanny, with Frederick and Mary, now appeared at the extremity of the walk, and, as they approached, Rosette perceived an air of spiritless languor,—of pensive meditation on the countenance, and even in the step of our heroine, that never struck her so forcibly before. She had often seen her pensive, sometimes languid; but to these was now added a look of woe, altogether inexplicable; and, when she perceived her friends attention anxiously fixed upon her, a tear started into her eye, and she turned into another walk.

The truth is, our heroine had discovered the seeds of a passion lurking in her mind, she never before supposed herself capable of. The contemplation of Mr. and Mrs. Leigh's conjugal happiness,—the air of un-

restrained pleasure, and open confidence there appeared in the behaviour of Sir Herbert and her friend,—created a feeling of envy and regret that such would never be her lot. Leslie's engagement to Miss Heathcote was admitted by the family; and though circumstances made her believe they wished it otherwise, honour and integrity would set aside all attempts to cancel it. Besides, on what rested the probability, that she, an obscure individual, without rank or fortune, would have been esteemed worthy of an alliance with the heir of a family, who might, from situation, almost choose a wife from any house beneath royalty?

Such were Fanny's thoughts, as she walked with Frederick and his Mary; and the sight of Sir Herbert and Miss Cavendish raised a sensation in her bosom almost amounting to agony. Rosette followed her with her eye, and saw, with increasing interest, her handkerchief applied to disperse the unusual tear. What was the cause? What could create grief in the

bosom of truth and innocence? A few months back, Rosette would have found it impossible to answer these questions; but love had made her clear-sighted. Love had taught her, that to nothing else could her friend's dejection be attributed. But was it possible Fanny's could be a hopeless passion? Was not she an object to create reciprocal feeling in any bosom, however worthy,—however exalted?

Sir Herbert followed the direction of Fanny's eye, and was at no loss to conceive the subject of her meditations. The attachment of Leslie had been one of his first observations upon the Downs at Burford, and his own cold reception, he attributed to the right cause—jealousy. Further investigation convinced him that the passion was mutual; though why our heroine had been so anxious to leave Newland, without finally seeing her lover, he was at a loss to determine.

When the party met at dinner, Fanny had so far recovered her usual composure,

that Lady Ann was unmindful of any change in her daughter; and Miss Cavendish determined not to be the first to invade the peace of her revered patroness.

CHAP. III.

A DECLARATION,—A CONFESSION,—AN UNEXPECTED MEETING,—AND A LAST FAREWELL.

Frederick, by desire of Lady Ann, left Mary for a few days at the Tower; and, in the evening, Colonel Parke, true to his appointment, arrived, and was received with the polite familiarity of an old acquaintance. Tremorne appeared in his eyes an earthly paradise;—Lady Ann he pronounced the most charming and delightful of women,—Mrs. Leigh and Miss Cavendish worthy of all praise,—and Fanny the presiding deity, who claimed exclusively the homage of mankind.

"Are you prepared," said Sir Herbert, to whom he made this declaration, "to

contend against a host of rivals? Miss Fitz-York is generally admired, and I know no young woman who more justly claims it."

"Nor I, by heaven!" emphatically exclaimed the Colonel. "But admiration does not express my feelings. I am in love,—deeply,—decidedly in love,—and unless the charming girl returns my passion——"

"What, already, Colonel? She has known you but a few short days."

"Very true! But you see how a few days have metamorphosed me."

"I do see it," said the Baronet, smiling; "but Miss Fitz-York is so young and attractive, and——"

"I am so old and disagreeable. I understand you, Herbert. You think me a vain superannuated fool, that deserves only to be laughed at."

"Indeed I do not. The affection of Colonel Parke confers honour on any female. I only meant to observe, that probably a girl of eighteen has more attrac-

tion for a man nearly forty than the man nearly forty has for the girl of eighteen; and that, consequently, he must allow the lady a little more time to discover his merits than he confesses it required to discern her's. To be serious, my dear Colonel, and because it would be wrong to flatter you, I honestly confess, that I fear your suit will be unsuccessful; not for lack of either merit or attraction on your part, but from a suspicion that the lady's heart is pre-occupied. I would not have hazarded a hint of the kind, but to save my friend the mortification of a refusal."

The Colonel shewed evident signs of disappointment, but at length said, "why were not you thus candid before?"

"Before you had seen the lady, do you mean, Colonel? This is the first private conversation we have had since the ball; and though your admiration was pretty evident at Salisbury, it was not for me to put a negative upon your present visit."

The Colonel arose, after an uneasy night, and requesting Lady Ann's attention for a

few moments, declared the impression her lovely daughter had made on his hitherto insensible heart,—that the fears which naturally suggested themselves of a prior attachment, added to the very mean opinion he entertained of his own pretensions, prevented his speaking to the young lady, until he had previously consulted her Ladyship; whose candour, he trusted, would justify the appeal, and prevent any useless application to Miss Fitz-York."

Lady Ann, politely thanking him for the honour his favourable opinion conferred on her daughter, assured him, that no prepossession, she was aware of, would militate against his pretensions, — that Fanny's choice, whenever she declared it, would meet with her full approbation,—but that probably he was not aware of the commonly-received opinion, namely, her very humble pretensions to fortune. "I mention this, Colonel," she added, "not with the idea that wealth has or will influence you, but in obedience to her father's last will, who wished the circumstance to be gene-

rally understood." The Colonel, in reply, assured her Ladyship that she did him no more than justice, in supposing him uninfluenced by wealth. The knowledge that Miss Fitz-York's pecuniary prospects were limited was a subject of rejoicing rather than the contrary, since it enabled him to shew the disinterestedness of his attachment. He then requested her Ladyship would be considerate enough to pave the way for an interview with her daughter.

"Are you not precipitate, Colonel?" interrupted Lady Ann. "A further acquaintance might considerably aid your cause; since Fanny is too little susceptible to fall in love at first sight, or upon a very short acquaintance."

"Never lose an advantage by procrastination, is a soldier's motto, and I have too few to risk the smallest. Will your Ladyship oblige me?"

"Certainly." The Colonel now retired, and tacitly acknowledged his presumption, in employing a female, younger than himself, to negociate a marriage with her

child. At the same time confessing, that the mother was little less charming than the daughter, and that it would have been more prudent, had the fate's so ordained it, to seek a connection where difference of age would have been no drawback, and where he might have expected a friend, a companion, and an adviser.

"Heyday! my good woman," methinks I hear some very young lady exclaim, "what are you about? Do you mean to make the gallant Colonel in love with both mother and daughter?"

"I mean, my dear Miss, to represent him as he really is. But whether he be in love with both,—or either,—or which,—time alone must disclose."

Lady Ann took the first opportunity of drawing her daughter aside, and informed her, in few words, of Colonel Parke's honourable declaration, and her promise to be his herald on the approaching occasion. Fanny heaved a deep sigh, as she confessed the impossibility of receiving the Colonel as a lover. An idea that she was going to

communicate the same pang to another, which had so painfully lacerated her own bosom, drew forth a feeling of compassion that suffused her eyes with tears, and caused a look of surprise from her Ladyship; who, taking her daughter's hand, said, "what ails my Fanny? If the Colonel be not to your taste, my love, I shall never urge the subject you may rest assured. Then, why this agitation?"

Fanny concealed her blushes with her handkerchief, whilst she exclaimed, almost inarticulately, "I am very weak, my dear mother, in giving way to emotions so culpable; but, indeed, you shall never have cause to reproach me again."

"Reproach Fanny! Has such a sentiment escaped me?"

"Oh, no!—I wander,—I know not what I say."

"You do not indeed, my love,—at least, I would fain think so,—when you call your emotions culpable; but retire and compose yourself. When you are more calm, I shall require your confidence.

In the mean time, remember, my child, we have hitherto lived as friends, and I trust every emotion of your heart will be poured into the sympathizing bosom of your affectionate mother."

Fanny, seizing her parent's hand, covered it with kisses, and, hurrying out of the room, left her Ladyship buried in deep meditation. That something of moment to her daughter's happiness was painfully concealed there remained not a shadow of doubt.

It now occurred, for the first time, that since her return she had seen her more frequently buried in thought than formerly; her countenance, too, had lost its playful gaiety, and assumed a look of care, quite foreign to its natural character. Lady Ann blamed herself for suffering these remarks to occur so late, but, surrounded by company, before whom Fanny had forced herself to appear chearful, no wonder the change had passed off with so little observation.

It naturally occurred to her Ladyship

that Sir Herbert Huntley, from being at Newland, was the best person to throw light on a subject so interesting. But, would it be fair,—would it be generous,—to seek information from others, when she had expressly declared, that from Fanny's own mouth she expected sincerity and confidence? No! she would wait her own time, and trust to that candour which had characterized her from earliest infancy.

Meanwhile, Fanny, secluded in the privacy of her own apartment, took herself severely to task for her weakness. To save the maternal heart of Lady Ann from suffering one pang on her account, she had determined to conceal a prepossession, which absence and reason she hoped would entirely conquer; but, taken by surprise, ere time had been allowed to soften the pungency of her feelings, she had incautiously betrayed that something was wrong, and *that* something must now be explained to her own mortification.

Lady Ann, from her window, seeing the

Colonel alone, and pacing the garden, as if in deep meditation, resolved to declare at once her daughter's resolution. The task she had undertaken was painful and unpleasant; but it was an incumbent duty, and the sooner a state of suspense is decided the better for all parties. Her approach was not perceived by the Colonel; but, the sound of her voice made him start, and he was beginning an apology, couched in very gallant terms, when her Ladyship, softening the intelligence as much as possible, informed him of her daughter's decision. "I have never yet, Colonel," she added, "endeavoured to bias her inclination, because, in an affair of such importance to her future happiness, she, and she only, must decide. That we are both sensible of the honour your attachment confers, I hope you will believe; and, I beg leave to assure you, that when that attachment subsides, as it will, into calm esteem and friendship, I shall not be backward to cultivate your further acquaintance."

"So fall the hopes of Feignwell!" said the Colonel, in soliloquy, after Lady Ann had quitted him: "I wish I had taken Herbert's hint; but I am justly punished for supposing a lovely young woman would listen to the overtures of a man old enough to be her father. Father! and why not? Lady Ann is still in her prime, and I almost think would have been my preferable choice, had I seen her before I encountered her syren daughter. But I'll do nothing rashly in future; my late defeat shall serve as a lesson, for I am now convinced that there is virtue—much virtue, in procrastination!"

Lady Ann, as a means of making the Colonel's visit more agreeable, requested Mr. Gaskell and the Vicar to join them at dinner; and their presence served, in some measure, to do away the embarrassment of Fanny. Her rejected admirer, to the astonishment and joy of all who were in the secret, appeared as little disconcerted and almost as happy as any of the party.

Fanny joyful and the Colonel happy!"

exclaims the aforesaid young miss. "When was there an instance of a young lady's joy, at finding the impression made by her charms so feeble, that the discarded swain could, in the very crisis of his disappointment, appear happy? And when was there a real lover happy under such circumstances?"

To the former accusation I reply, "that my heroine was educated at Tremorne, where the vanity of universal admiration was never heard of,—where the misery of a fellow-creature, though that fellow-creature should happen to be a lover, was a subject of pain,—and, that triumph was a word never used in Lady Ann's school, except in reference to virtue and goodness."

"Come, you have made a tolerable defence for Fanny," exclaims my opponent; "but the lover,—there we shall puzzle you."

"Are you sure the Colonel *was* a lover?"

"We have his own authority for it."

"Did you never know an instance, my

dear miss, of a person *fancying* himself in love, and after his suit had been rejected, wisely adopting Mr. Pope's maxim, 'whatever is, is right?'"

"Never! Difficulty and opposition, instead of quenching, add fuel to the flame."

"Amongst very young people I grant you. But middle aged gentlemen mix prudence with passion; and what prudent man, on the verge of forty, would fret himself into a consumption for a girl of eighteen? Particularly with an object before his eyes infinitely more eligible in point of years, and with every grace and accomplishment of her daughter ripened to maturity? If these arguments will not justify my Colonel's flexibility, I must give him up to the indignation of those readers who bow before the sovereignty of love, and think every appeal to reason and common sense little short of high treason.

The following day, Sir Herbert and his friend took leave; when the Colonel confessed the justice of Miss Fitz-York's sentence, and obtained permission to revisit

the Tower as a friend. Once more confined to a family party, for of Mrs. Leigh and Mr. Strictland Lady Ann made no strangers, Fanny followed her mother into her dressing-room, and, with blushes and confusion, related the history of her heart. Whilst dwelling on the almost parental affection of the Duke and Duchess, the character of Leslie unfolded itself in colours so glowing, that Lady Ann sighed to find the object of her daughter's affections too amiable to be easily forgotten; and blamed herself for throwing that daughter into the way of temptation at an age so susceptible, and without a monitor whose quick sightedness might have announced the danger, ere it was too late to shun it. Young Talbot's engagement to her Grace's niece seemed so probable, and withal so fully corroborated by her own confession, both before Fanny, and when she could have no suspicion of her being a witness, that she felt no hesitation in believing its truth, confirmed, as undoubtedly it was, by the speech of her Grace on the last evening of

Fanny's sojourn at Newland, although she fancied, from the whole of her daughter's account, that the engagement was prematurely concluded, and that the Duke and his heir wished it otherwise.

Fanny felt greatly relieved by this communication. Having nothing further to disclose, her eye sustained the gaze of Lady Ann without shrinking, and confidence, completely restored, paved the way for admonition and advice. Her Ladyship was too well assured of the native energy of her daughter to have any fears ultimately respecting the present attachment; for, a sense of right and justice were too well grounded to form a wish of invading either;—and absence and variety of occupation would restore her mind to its former tone. So reasoned Lady Ann,—so hoped her daughter. How far their expectations were answered time will demonstrate.

Julia, since her return, had remained invisible to all, except her brother and sister, and the latter had only been admitted

once. Shame is a powerful feeling in a susceptible mind, and only to be conquered by a consciousness of no longer deserving it. Julia sincerely repented of her youthful errors, and retired from each conference with the Vicar with a mind improved and fast verging towards self-esteem. Her moments of recreation were spent in the garden, or in lonely rambles at those hours, when there appeared least probability of encountering the gaze she yet wanted courage to face.

One morning, having passed a sleepless night, Fanny arose with the sun; and, knowing Mary Leigh took pleasure in an early ramble, roused her from her slumbers, and the youthful pair set forward to brush the morning dew from the tender herbage. The village cock crowed as they passed his domain,—the watchful house-dog peeped from his kennel, as if to ascertain their motives for rambling at an hour so unusual,—the birds welcomed their approach with carrols of cheerfulness,—and the lambs frisked round their dams in

token of delight;—all nature appeared gaily grateful; and our heroine, sympathizing in the general joy, bounded across the fields, frequently deviating from the beaten track by the temptation of a newly raised mushroom, or gathering from the hedge-rows the sweet scented violet.

They were preparing to cross a stile, which led in another direction to the village, when a female, clad in "suits of woe," approached from the other side, and raising her head at the unusual interruption, screamed out, "Mary!" and fell to the ground. Mrs. Leigh and Fanny both flew to her assistance; when the former joyfully exclaimed, "Julia! Is it possible? Do I indeed once more behold my deliverer?" The mutual recognition instantly explained to Fanny where Mary and Julia had before met; and their separation in the area of the abandoned woman's house, presented the sister of Rosette in such favourable colours, that Fanny pressed the hand she still held, and expressed her approbation in terms so flattering, that the

face of Julia glowed with delight. A sensation that had long been a stranger to her care-worn bosom throbbed through her veins, and she exclaimed, "now, indeed, I may hope to be forgiven, since I have been the humble instrument of snatching a fellow-creature from destruction. There is now a *certainty* of your safety, which I durst before scarcely think *probable*; for, though, through my means, you escaped the snares of Clayton and Mrs. Letsom, I knew not but you might fall into hands as bad; and I hail this meeting as a token of reconciliation to God and to myself."

"And to your friends, I hope," said Fanny; "amongst whom those at the Tower are not to be reckoned amongst the *least* of your well-wishers. Mary looks as if she had much to communicate; I shall therefore leave you, on condition that you join our breakfast table at eight o'clock. No hesitation,—for I will accept no denial. Our strangers are gone,—every body will be prepared to receive you kindly,—and I shall endeavour to prevail upon your bro-

ther to join our party; so *bonjour à present.*"

Fanny found the Vicar just risen, but he looked grave when she mentioned her arrangement. "Your benevolence, my dear young friend," said he, "carries you too far. Julia may in time be worthy of your favour,—I trust she is making rapid strides towards it,—but you are too young to brave public opinion; that will strongly condemn your purpose, and I have too much regard for the honour of Miss Fitz-York to sacrifice its smallest point, even to sustain a sister's broken reputation."

Fanny looked disappointed. Her affectionate and ardent bosom throbbed with good wishes towards all mankind, and for the sister of Rosette she felt an interest almost equal to what herself would have excited. "Is Julia never again," she inquired, "to be taken into favour."

"Partially," he replied. "Her relative connexions would be culpable not to hold forth every encouragement to returning virtue. Those discreet matrons who stand

high above the world's censure, would likewise honour themselves and human nature, by lifting up a fallen sister; but youth should be particularly guarded against improper acquaintance. The breath of calumny is a two-edged sword, and cuts deeply into the fair fame of unsuspecting innocence. A wound once received is with difficulty healed, and scarcely ever without leaving a scar to denote the moral mischief. Julia has suffered, and will continue to suffer for her imprudence, both in her own person, and in that of her nearest connexions; 'tis more than probable a sister's peace may be the sacrifice, for what mother would willingly yoke her son to a tainted stock?"

Fanny listened attentively to the worthy divine's monition, but could not give up her plan without appearing capricious; nor, indeed, were his arguments in her opinion conclusive. He allowed that Lady Ann would do herself honour by noticing Julia in her reformed state; would it not then be *dishonourable* to *neglect* her? And

would her daughter be a sufficient plea? At length, by way of compromise, our heroine agreed to be governed by her mother's opinion, and left the vicarage, eager to consult her.

Lady Ann applauded her motives, at the same time confessing the justice of her worthy friend's counsel. "But, in this case," she continued, "he does Julia *less* than justice, and you *more*, for no reason that I can understand, except her being his *sister*. Any other young woman, under exactly similar circumstances, he would, I am persuaded, recommend to my patronage; but, for fear of appearing interested, or incurring future blame, he is cautious even to a fault. We must not, however, let his generosity get the better of ours; I shall receive Julia in the company of her brother and sister, and those who would do otherwise possess a fastidiousness I shall not envy."

Fanny, highly gratified, walked about the court watching the approach of her visitors, without acquainting Rosette of her

expected guest. At length they appeared, accompanied by Mr. Cavendish, and Fanny, giving him a look of triumph, told Julia her mother was impatie t to see her. Now the moment approached her trembling limbs almost refused their support, till her brother, taking her hand, led her into the breakfast-room, and, with an appropriate speech, presented her to Lady Ann. Rosette looked surprised, but it was surprise mixed with pleasure; and Fanny, to take off the embarrassment of the meeting, related how and where they had met; and concluded, by saying, "that, as Mrs. Leigh and Julia were old acquaintance, she should have been wanting in hospitality not to have invited the latter to spend the day at least.

Since Lady Ann's return into Devonshire, Major Stokes had left his card twice, but the impression made in the neighbourhood had been so unfavourable, owing to the conduct of his quondam wife, that her Ladyship had no wish to encourage the acquaintance, until informed by Mr. Ca-

vendish that he was a character perfectly harmless, and in many respects estimable. This intelligence altered her intention; and, accompanied by her own family and the Vicar, she made a call at the lodge. The Major appeared truly sensible of the favour, and expressed his obligation for the honour so many fine women had conferred on a poor isolated, neglected, old *bachelor*,—the last word very emphatic;—in terms so gallant, so truly consistent with the old school, and so unlike the vapid politeness of modern times, that the party were infinitely amused and gratified. Many Eastern delicacies were produced, and Hassan, his faithful black, skipped about as though the sight of so many beautiful and respectable ladies cheered his heart as well as his master's. In short, before the end of the visit, a treaty of alliance and friendship was agreed upon, and the preliminary article was a promise to dine at Pine-Lodge the day but one following.

As they were preparing to depart, Mr. Gossip dropped in, and, bowing profoundly

to the ladies, asked Mr. Cavendish if he expected company at the vicarage? "If not, my dear Sir," he continued, "you will be taken by surprise, for a chaise stopped at your door as I ascended the hill. Major, how are you to-day? You look more cheerful than usual, and no wonder; the sight of beauty is better than medicine; eh, Becky?"

This reference to his wife was now become so inveterate a habit, that, present or absent, he seldom finished a sentence without appealing to her. On the present occasion, the ladies looked at each other, for, unacquainted with his foible, and the name of his wife, they wondered of course what was meant. The Vicar was too much absorbed in thought to offer an explanation, or indeed know that any was necessary; but Major Stokes, conceiving at once the nature and extent of their exchanged glances, said, smiling, "Becky is his wife, ladies, whose judgment he appears to hold in great veneration, if we may judge by his continually applying to

her.* By all who know his strange habit, this appeal to Becky is placed in a parenthesis; but if any of my fair friend's christian names had been Rebecca, your reference, Gossip, would, with great justice, have been deemed impertinent. Did such a circumstance never happen in the course of your visits?"

"Yes, once; and a most unfortunate affair it was. I happened to be sent for by a pregnant lady, whose maiden sister, as my ill stars would have it, was christened Rebecca; and a more starched piece of uprightness never issued from the hands of her maker. After much consultation and advice, the married lady bespoke my attendance at a specified time, whether I was wanted or not, and laid great stress upon my punctuality. To which I replied, "certainly, my dear madam. People in your situation ought not to suffer the smallest uneasiness from disappointment; we are used to these things, and fully understand them. Don't we, Becky?"

"A very mal-apropos question indeed:

Gossip," said the Major. "How did you get over it?"

"I never did get over it, Májor. Those unlucky words lost me a hundred a-year. If you had seen the formal maiden's phiz, when I inadvertently, but innocently, made use of them, you would have remembered it, as I shall to the last hour of my existence. All the evil passions were conveyed in one glance of her ferocious eye. She bridled, and tossed, and asked me how I dared to address her upon such a subject? But, so far from knowing what she meant, I was ignorant of having used the offensive words, until her sister explained the matter; at the same time telling me that she would dispense with my future visits."

"Very unfortunate indeed!" observed Lady Ann.

"Yet it has not cured him you see, my lady," said the Major. "Indeed, I believe these habits are very difficult to eradicate. A friend of mine, at Calcutta, interlarded the whole of his conversation with those

unmeaning expletives, *fisa-fuzza!* and he became at length so notorious, that many people recognized him by that appellation, who, in fact, were ignorant of his real name."

The party now took leave, and were passing through the pleasant fields leading to Tremorne, when a figure, uncommonly tall, and out of all proportion thin, appeared walking slowly towards them, leaning on the arm of an old man, and apparently very weak and emaciated. Conjecture was busy in guessing who this visitor of the Major's could be,—for the road led to no other habitation,—when he sunk into the arms of his aged attendant, who called loudly for help. Mr. Cavendish flew to his assistance; but words are inadequate to express his surprise, when he found himself clasping the almost transparent hands of Henry Tudor! He had not fainted, but merely sunk down overpowered by his feelings. "My Henry!" "My revered preceptor!" were all that escaped the lips of either, before the ladies and Mr. Strict-

land joined them. An exclamation from Lady Ann was followed by a shriek from Fanny; when Tudor, staggering towards them, partly through weakness, but more from veneration, dropped upon his knees. "Oh my adored friends!" he faintly articulated, "I return never more to leave you whilst life circulates in this feeble frame; and, when the vital spark is extinct, my spirit, if such be the will of God, shall hover round the spot consecrated to love and friendship."

These words were uttered with such pious solemnity, that tears flowed from every eye except the speaker's; his were raised to heaven in pious meditation. Mr. Cavendish, lifting him from the ground, blamed him for venturing out, after the fatigue of his journey; when, with a faint smile, he replied, "could I resist the temptation, when I was informed a short walk would bring me into the presence of friends so dear? Friends, whom I have travelled so many leagues both by sea and land, with a frame nearly exhausted, to

behold once more? No! my dear tutor! the moments of this life are too fleeting,—the pleasures too evanescent,—to lose one, or risk the other by delay."

Lady Ann would not hear of a separation, and Henry, supported by Mr. Cavendish and his old servant, once more retired to the hospitable mansion, where the happiest hours of his life had been passed, but so exhausted, that refreshment and repose were indispensably necessary. Whilst he is vainly endeavouring to court the latter, we shall briefly state, that consumption, a slow but sure destroyer, and one that had proved fatal to several of his family, was undermining a constitution never strong, and which, uneasiness at being separated from his English friends, joined to a growth uncommonly rapid, had helped to weaken. He never enjoyed an hours health after his arrival at home; and the unexpected sight of a step-mother, with a family of her own, to whom his father appeared to have transferred all his affections, even to the prejudice of an only son, tended to aggravate

the irritability caused by sickness, and the loss of those who knew full well how to appreciate the virtues and amiabilities of a youth so deserving.

He had been re-called to the family mansion, by the mandates of his father's wife, who dreaded the expense of a foreign education; and convinced her husband that more money had been already spent than was consistent with the young man's future prospects. Very few weeks elapsed ere his illness bore an alarming aspect: the disorder, which proved fatal to his mother and several of her children, threatened the life of the last survivor, and he expressed an anxious wish to return to Britain. This request was for a long time refused; but, finding him resolved to depart at all hazards, an old servant, who had grown grey in the family, and doated upon Harry as the last remnant of his departed mistress, was appointed to attend him into Devonshire, and remain until his fate was decided, either for life or death.

This slow leave seemed to renovate his

sickly frame; but, alas! the voyage, from which much had been expected, proved so long and boisterous, that, ere he arrived in London, all hopes of recovery were lost, and it was scarcely expected he would live to reach his destination. A few days rest, however, revived the lingering spark, and he arrived at Tremorne no worse than when he quitted Heligoland, and much better than on his first arrival in England.

Fanny's affection for her young play-fellow, and youthful preceptor in many juvenile exercises, was of that nature which a sister feels for a beloved brother; and her sorrow for the untimely fate which inevitably awaited him, was proportionably severe. She placed him next to herself at dinner, and, by those delicate attentions which sit so gracefully upon young and lovely women, succeeded in coaxing his appetite, and raising his spirits, almost beyond what his strength could support. "I am very weak," he once said, smiling, "but you know not what wonders an English spring can perform. It was leaving

this blessed spot which first introduced disease into my frame; but now I am restored to friends who love me, and whom I love beyond my existence, I feel a something which tells me that hope is not extinct, and that I shall live to realize many promised schemes of felicity."

It is the nature of this disease to hold out flattering hopes of futurity,—hopes which seldom leave the patient whilst life remains. Before the end of the week he declared himself renovated by the salubrious breezes of Devon, and laid plans for the ensuing summer, in all of which Fanny was the heroine. During several weeks, life and death seemed to be contending which should gain the victory; but, in the beginning of December, Lady Ann and her daughter were summoned to the Vicarage to receive his last farewell. "I feel myself going, my dear friends," he feebly uttered, "and as you and my valuable tutor are perhaps the only people who will regret my early fate, I would never again willingly lose sight of you."

Fanny sobbed aloud. "Death, my beloved companion," he continued, addressing her, "has no terrors for me; on the contrary, I hail his approach: for life would have had no charms, divested of your society, and I am now too well convinced that the hopes I once formed were a flattering delusion,—a dream that would never—never have been realized. May you be happy,—much happier than your poor Harry could have made you; who, with all the *will* that ever man possessed, must still have wanted *power*. You my revered friend," turning his glazed eyes upon Lady Ann, "might not bewail my loss, since I am quitting a feverish existence,—a life at best of imperfect happiness, to partake of bliss unutterable, and joys everlasting. To you, my kind protector," pressing his tutor's hand, "I owe more than a life, extended beyond the allotted time of mortals could ever re-pay. You have taught me how to *live*, had it pleased the giver of all good to lengthen out my span of life, and you have taught me,—blessed knowledge,

—how to *die.* Think of me hereafter, as of one who has only preceded you on a journey we are all compelled to take. Some set out in early morning,—others in the middle of the day,—and a third class postpone their departure until evening,—but we shall each eventually arrive at the same spot,—the termination of our voyage through this sea of troubles, will land us all at the same port, that it may be a joyful haven to every one of us, God of his infinite mercy grant——"

His breathing was so laborious, that this pathetic address was delivered with many breaks and pauses, and he seemed to have something further to add, when a convulsive sob closed the mortal career of the good, the grateful, the feeling Henry; whose youth gave promise of as much perfection as finite beings are capable of, and whose death made an impression on his sorrowing friends, never wholly eradicated.

CHAP. IV.

A WEDDING, AND VARIOUS ATTEMPTS TO GET MARRIED,—A WIDOW'S RESOLUTION,—FAMILY OVERTURES,—AND AN ACT OF JUSTICE.

HAVING consigned Henry to the silent tomb, we must re-trace our foot-steps; for, though we have brought our history down to December, we parted from the principal personages in the preceding autumn; and many occurrences, it is necessary the reader should be acquainted with, happened in the interim.

Sir Herbert Huntley had been gone a week, towards the close of which Rosette exhibited evident signs of uneasiness. Every time the postman knocked, after the fifth day, her agitation shewed itself by a

tremor and a suffusion of countenance; but no letter appeared in his well-known character, from which she augured consequences fatal to her peace. He would have written, she was well assured, had her Ladyship been either favourable or undecided, but his total silence was a death blow to her happiness. The sixth day passed over,—the seventh arrived without remembrance,—but Lady Ann received two letters, by this day's post, of some importance to our history. One was impressed with an Earl's coronet, the other with the simple initials, J. H.; the handwriting of each was unknown; by accident the latter had the precedence, and ran thus:—

"Rose-Mount, Sept. 9, 1812.

"Madam,

"My son has communicated a circumstance connected with his intended wife, which must, I conceive, fill the breast of every mother with uneasiness. At the same time, Miss Cavendish has discovered such

true greatness of mind, and relies so implicitly on my justice and candour, that if your Ladyship corroborates Herbert's statement, I cannot withdraw my consent to a marriage once earnestly desired.

"On any other subject, I should be ashamed to doubt the young man's veracity,—for his integrity has been a mother's boast,—but love we all know is painted blind, therefore we cannot wonder that his decisions should be frequently incorrect. I know your Ladyship will feel pleasure in communicating whatever you know of good, and I am well convinced that I shall not be deceived, in the smallest point, respecting the eligibility or impropriety of receiving Miss Cavendish into my family.

"I have the honour to remain, with perfect esteem towards yourself and Miss Fitz-York,

"Your Ladyship's friend and servant,

JOSEPHA HUNTLEY."

Lady Ann, smiling, presented the letter

to Rose, and broke the seal of her *illustrious* correspondent.

"Castle-Priory, Kent,
Sept. 9, 1812.

"Dear Madam,

"The Countess, your sister, commissions me to open the door of reconciliation, from a perfect conviction that I was always the friend of Lady Ann Fitz-York, and the advocate of her lovely daughter. The family misunderstanding, which unhappily subsists, I am now and ever was at a loss to account for; but I have no hesitation in believing it originated with Lady Mountcastle. Her lofty spirit, when she believes herself in the smallest degree neglected, is apt to shew itself in a way few people are prepared to approve, and still fewer to allow; but, as I said to her Ladyship this morning, let me hold out the olive branch, and I am sure your sister is too placable to reject it.

"Very little encouragement will bring us into Devonshire, than which, nothing

could be more desirable to Moseley and Maria, who beg to unite in every good wish with,

"Dear Madam,

Your Ladyship's truly-devoted friend and brother,

MOUNTCASTLE."

Lady Ann, with another smile, presented this letter to Mr. Strictland; but it was not the smile of complacency,—or the smile of pleasure,—it partook more of scorn and contempt than any other passion; and was such a stranger to the features of her Ladyship, that Fanny knew the letter of quality conveyed no pleasing intelligence. She wondered if it bore the Oxford post-mark,—and, if so, whether it was written in a male or female character. What would any body at Newland write that could disturb the repose of her mother? She was proceeding in her wonderings and conjectures, when Mr. Strictland returned the paper with a smile of a different character. His countenance was

arch and knowing, as much as to say, "Was not I right?" But though it conveyed no intelligence to our heroine, it dissipated her uneasiness, for, would her guardian look pleased at any circumstance that *ought* to make his friend unhappy?

"Read it, Fanny," said her Ladyship, pointing to the letter, "and whilst you digest the contents, perhaps Miss Cavendish will favour me with her company in my dressing-room."

The two ladies retired; and Fanny could think of nothing but the pleasures of a family union, and the delight of an unreserved intercourse with Moseley and Maria.

Lady Ann lost not a moment in answering the mother of Sir Herbert. Her letter was polite and friendly, and highly favourable to Rose and her brothers. The Vicar was mentioned in an especial manner; "in short, my dear madam," concluded her Ladyship, "I know no young woman I should prefer to Miss Cavendish, were I placed exactly in your situation."

Rose shed tears of pleasure as she perused this gratifying tribute of regard, and hastened to the vicarage to commune with her brother and sister; for Julia was now become accessible, and held a regular intercourse with the family. Even aunt Susy could approach her without fear of contamination, since she had been received at the Tower; such virtue do the ignorant attach to dignified patronage.

Major Stokes was a daily visitor both at the Vicarage and the Tower, and had acquired such an ascendancy, by the purity of his principles, and the gentleness and suavity of his manners, that no party within ten miles of Tremorne was thought complete unless the Major made one. In losing his wife he had likewise lost many of his fancied diseases; and the money,—no inconsiderable sum,—formerly expended in quackery, was now devoted to the laudable purpose of relieving the aged and infirm poor. In this charitable employment he was ably assisted by Hassan, who ex-

claimed one day when he met Lady Ann's house-keeper in the village, "My massa no *cation* buy de syrup,—and de tincture,—and de balm now. His disorder all go avay vid missy, and good day it vas for poor blackey ven dey scamper off. Ve happy as de day now! No scold,—no noise,—no quarrel among de *sarvents*. No drive massa to his own room to tink vat ail him, and vat he shall get to cure de liver, and de kidney, and de nerve, and de vorme. His liver and kidney be vell now,—his nerve quite strong,—and he have no vorm at all; but someting de matter vid him for all dat, he be in lofe."

"In love, Hassan!"

"Yes, ver deep in lofe, vid somebody at de Tower; but veder it be my Lady, or young Missy, or Missy Cavendis, ve cannot tell."

"I wish it may be me, Hassan; I should like to be mistress of Pine-Lodge."

"You better as house-keeper at de Tower. Our old plague be once good

sarvant like you, but she make dibble of a missy."

The approach of his master put an end to Hassan's loquacity; and whilst one proceeded on the errand of benevolence, the other made a morning call at the Tower.

Lady Ann felt the insult offered to her understanding, by Lady Mountcastle's letter; for, although it appeared in her Lord's name, the fabrication, she had no doubt, was from the fertile brain of her sister, for one very powerful reason,—the Earl had neither opinions nor will of his own. Had the Countess really so mean an opinion of her as to suppose she could turn and wind her at pleasure? Was she so mere a puppet as to be moved by wires, at the command of another? She spurned the idea! And that her arrogant sister might not suppose any time was given to deliberation, she answered his Lordship without delay. But the most correct method of explaining her sentiments and

opinions will be to give the letter verbatim.

"Tower of Tremorne,
Sept. 11, 1812.

"My Lord,

"Perhaps a letter is never so well answered as at the moment of receiving it, except in undecided cases, or where deliberation is necessary. Neither of these appear requisite in the present instance. Indecision would betray a feebleness of character my acquaintance do not charge me with; and deliberation on the subject of family disagreement has long ceased. Could I charge myself with any relative fault, or even neglect, I would readily acknowledge it; but professing my innocence both of real and implied crime, I am not one of the few who can approve or submit to the lofty spirit of Lady Mountcastle.

"When Miss Fitz-York requires an advocate, I shall have no hesitation in em-

ploying your Lordship; till that period arrives, I must beg leave to decline all interference.

"I have the honour to remain,
Your Lordship's, &c.
ANN FITZ-YORK."

Before it was thought possible, Sir Herbert flew, on the wings of love and impatience, to claim his bride; and brought a letter from his mother, containing a pressing invitation for Lady Ann and Fanny to accompany the new married couple to Rose-Mount, where they would be expected immediately after the ceremony. This polite request her Ladyship declined, partly on account of Mr. Strictland, but chiefly because she was in daily expectation of Mrs. Bloomfield. She consented, however, to lose her daughter for a stipulated fortnight, because a refusal would have appeared disrespectful to her young friend, than which nothing could be further from her inclinations.

The day which united Sir Herbert and

Rosette was one of jubilee to the poor of the village; to feed and clothe whom the young Baronet left money with their pastor. Lady Ann's congratulations were accompanied with a sealed packet, which she requested Lady Huntley would open in the presence of her husband's family; and, enjoining her daughter to be mindful of her health and careful of her happiness, bade them a temporary farewell.

The morning after Fanny's departure, a courier arrived with despatches from the Duke of Newland, containing formal proposals on behalf of his nephew; who, his Grace said, would have been his own herald, had not he persuaded him to await the result of a letter.

Her Ladyship read it over and over again, before she could decide upon an answer. This overture confirmed Fanny's conjecture that neither the Duke nor Mr. Talbot were now in favour of the family arrangement, whatever they might have been; but, that did not lessen the dishonour of relinquishing a plan, that necessa-

rily involved the happiness of both the young lady and her Grace; for, could she look with indifference on the desertion of her niece in favour of an alliance so disproportionate in point of fortune, as the world generally supposed? And could Fanny be happy, even allied to the man of her choice, under the consciousness that she had, however innocently, ruined the peace of a confiding, and doubtless amiable, young woman, who might sink under the blow aimed indirectly by her hand? Never! Fanny must be happy independent of another's misery, or it would be no happiness for her.

Judging what would be her daughter's sentiments from what she herself felt, Lady Ann despatched the following answer to the Duke.

"Tower of Tremorne,
Sept. 26, 1812.

"My Lord,

"I am favoured with your Grace's letter, but must beg leave, unequivocally,

to decline the honour you intend my family.

"Miss Fitz-York's fortune is too humble, in the world's estimation, to aspire to the heir of your noble house, and she too honourable in sentiment knowingly to infringe the rights of another. Besides, she is under too many obligations to the Duchess of Newland's favourable opinion to do any thing inimical to the happiness or domestic comfort of her Grace, who, doubtless, is anxious to have every thing arranged agreeable to the original intentions of the family.

"Fanny is at present from home, or she would have taken advantage of your messenger to pay her respects where they are so justly due. I beg mine may be accepted, and remain,

My Lord,
Your Grace's obliged
and faithful servant,
ANN FITZ-YORK."

The return of the courier involved the

noble house of Newland in wonder and perplexity. Lady Ann's letter was understood by none of the family, except Philippa, and she chose to appear as ignorant as the rest. Her Ladyship was the only mother they were acquainted with, who would point out her daughter's want of fortune as an objection to an honourable establishment; and *whose* rights she would infringe by accepting the Duke's proposal, they were at a loss to guess. Her Grace's happiness, too, seemed involved in Lady Ann's refusal, and the arrangement of some former plan. "What schemes, Duchess, have you been forming," said his Grace, "inscrutable to us, and known only at Tremorne?"

"I declare," replied the Duchess, "'tis the most perfectly mysterious circumstance I ever met with. Lady Ann must have been imposed upon; and yet, who could have any interest in the fabrication?"

After the family consultation broke up, Philippa sought Corbett, and advised him, if he had not given up all wish as well as

hope, to speed into Devonshire, and make a last effort to gain a young and lovely wife, with a fortune quite equal to his expectations, "Fanny," she added, "is at present from home, and that perhaps is in your favour; for you will have time to wheedle the old woman; and, if you once gain her approbation, the young one affects so much duty and sentiment, that she will doubtless follow mamma's lead."

Corbett approved the plan. He had once fancied himself a favourite with Lady Ann; and, as Leslie was refused, no matter upon what principle, now was the time to strike a bold stroke. Accordingly, he pretended to receive letters which required his presence, and left Newland the following day for town, which route he was obliged to take, for reasons which many gentlemen of the army are obliged to submit to, namely, want of cash.

Leslie tried various means to obtain leave of absence; for, he was too anxious to procure a solution of the written mystery to remain supine or inactive; and,

his Grace declined troubling her Ladyship again on the subject, since her declaration, he thought, was rather unceremoniously imperative. "We shall probably meet in town next winter," he added, "and can then come to a proper understanding, without making undue concessions, or appearing more anxious for the alliance than *I* or *my* heir ought to be." "Can we be too anxious, my dear Sir, with such an object in view? Recal her person, her mind, her manners, to your recollection, and then say, if such a prize is not worth some sacrifice?"

"I confess Fanny Fitz-York surpasses all the young women of my acquaintance; but, we must not altogether lose sight of our *dignity*. Her lady mother appears to enter into the full meaning of the word, and I like to follow a good example."

Leslie submitted for the present to curb his impatience, perhaps the more readily on account of our heroine's absence; had she been in Devonshire, we are not sure

that love would have yielded to the Duke's arguments.

Mrs. Bloomfield joined her friends at the appointed time, but suffered a severe disappointment at the absence of her favourite; the occasion, indeed, reconciled the necessity, for the Baronet and Rose stood high in her esteem; "and, as her stay will be short," she continued, "we three old folks can dawdle away the time one way or another. You are all too good,—too règular,—too wise, at Tremorne, to offer any scope to my fault-finding talents; therefore, by way of spinning out existence till Fanny's arrival, suppose you make me useful in your laboratory, for I have no doubt you are the Lady Bountiful of the village."

"No, indeed," replied her Ladyship. "We have a resident apothecary, and I should be sorry to usurp his province. We now and then administer kitchen physic; but, in the composition of that, my cook is so excellent, that I fear we shall find

you no employment in the way of usefulness; and, as you justly observe, we are too little fashionable,—too little eccentric, —in this remote place, to amuse you with folly."

Notwithstanding the widow's pretended dread of *ennui*, time passed pleasantly at the Tower, and usefully at the Vicarage. Julia, under her brother and Lady Ann's direction, commenced a system of education, of which her nephew and niece were the objects; and shewed such an earnest desire to act properly, and to wipe out the stain of former imprudence, that she met with the applause and approbation of her Ladyship, and, from her example, of the whole village. Mary Leigh's grateful and affectionate heart was never so happy as when Julia added to her family circle; Frederick loved her for the never-to-be-forgotten service she had rendered him in the person of his wife; and good Mrs. Carter, for the same reason, hailed her approach.

Thus respected by others, she learnt to

respect herself; and deeply—feelingly sensible of her own errors, determined with the most sedulous attention to devote her days to the young Georgiana, and act as a Pharos to guard her against the vanity and folly which had been so destructive to herself.

We have mentioned, in the beginning of this history, that Lady Ann Fitz-York was left a widow, when her attractions had scarcely reached maturity, and that those attractions were of no common order; will it then readily be believed that such a woman for seven years had been overlooked,—that not one matrimonial overture had been made to a young, a beautiful, an elegant, an accomplished, widow? But such is the fact! and only to be accounted for from her retired life and secluded situation. Not a disengaged man had been admitted to the honour of her acquaintance, except Mr. Strictland and the Vicar; and, to them she appeared in a light too sacred,—too sublime, to be approached with the common homage of

mortality,—in their eyes she was a divinity, and worshipped accordingly. After seven years of comparative youth, without one advance, what must have been her surprise to receive two declarations on the same day; at a period of her life, too, when all her matrimonial thoughts were confined to her blooming daughter?

The first letter she opened was from Colonel Parke, who expressed himself in the following manner:

"London, Sept. 26, 1812.

"Madam,

"I feel myself placed in rather an awkward predicament, and throw myself on your mercy, as the only tribunal that can acquit me.

"After being the avowed admirer of Miss Fitz-York, how shall I declare my respect, my homage, my love, for your Ladyship, without subjecting myself to the charge of fickleness and caprice? To my own asseveration little credit will attach, because I have too much at stake to plead

disinterestedness, and too little to hope from my own merit, not to feel, and that strongly, the temerity of my present proceeding.

"When I first became acquainted with Miss Fitz-York, I had never seen your Ladyship; but, on the word of a soldier, I honestly avow my first introduction, at Tremorne, convinced me, that your daughter's youthful charms were but an outline of the finished picture I there beheld, and that in admiring her I laid the foundation for a more proper and lasting attachment to yourself.

"Deign, Madam, to think favourably of this avowal, and rest assured that it breathes the genuine sentiments of,

Your Ladyship's
sincerely devoted
admirer and servant,
FORTUNATUS PARKE."

Lady Ann had too much sense to be vain, and too little humility to think herself past the age for a sincere attachment. The

Colonel's "*finished picture,*" therefore, only raised a smile of incredulity, as she viewed the youthful blooming countenance of Fanny; whilst his acknowledgement that the mother would make a more "*proper*." wife, for a person of his years, than the daughter, met with her full concurrence. She was a decided enemy to inequalities of age in the married state; but that was scarcely superior to her own determination never to make a second choice.

The other letter was from Major Stokes, and couched in the usual form. It began by praising the lady,—continued with offering himself a candidate for her favour,—and concluded with profuse offers of settlement and dowery. Answers were immediately returned to each, acknowledging the honour, &c. but decidedly declining their offers, for the reasons above stated, namely, an unchangeable objection to second marriages.

Fanny returned, after fourteen days of bridal festivity, and gracefully thanked the Widow for so kindly supplying her

place. "I left my friend," she continued, "happy in her husband, and cherished as a beloved daughter and sister by Lady and Miss Huntley, of whom report has not exaggerated. They are charming women, and promise to accompany the young Lady Huntley in her first visit to Tremorne."

"How was the legacy received, my love," asked Lady Ann.

"Oh! my dear mother! you cannot conceive any thing like Rosette's surprise. We arrived at Rose-Mount to dinner; and, amid congratulations, and rejoicings, and joy, the packet lay neglected in my friend's ridicule. Dear Tremorne and my beloved mother are never long absent from my memory, and an association of ideas brought the forgotten paper to my recollection. "Rose," said I, "did not Lady Ann intrust something to your care, which the present seems a favourable moment to produce?" She blushed her thanks for my remembrance, and drawing forth the packet, presented it with due respect and reverence to her Lord. When he, smiling,

observed, "I hope I shall never be tempted to open a letter addressed to Lady Huntley; but, on the very day which gives me that privilege, it would shew a want of gallantry unheard of in the annals of married life."

The bride then broke the seal, and spread upon the table five Bank-bills for a thousand pounds each, inclosed with these words, '*a tribute of respect and gratitude from the late Mr. O'Brian.*' To describe Rosette's astonishment is beyond my ability, therefore I shall leave it to your own imagination. The next thing which presented itself was a diamond ring, curiously nestled in cotton; and, lastly, a case, containing the miniature resemblances of your Ladyship and myself. I will not say that these produced greater pleasure than the more costly remembrances, but I think they conveyed an equal proportion, if I may judge by the effect produced. The tear of delight trembled in her eye,—she gratefully kissed each picture, and, turning to the Dowager Lady Huntley, said,

'teach me, dear madam, to bear as becomes your daughter the tide of joy which rushes to my bosom at this gratifying token from my revered patroness. The images of her Ladyship and my beloved Frances are too deeply engraven on my heart to require the aid of these remembrancers; nevertheless, they shall be cherished, in the absence of the originals, with enthusiastic zeal; and, whenever I find myself sliding into error, a glimpse of Lady Ann Fitz-York's benign countenance will act as a silent monitor, and turn me, as heretofore, into the path of propriety.'

Every one seemed tacitly to enjoy my friend's satisfaction. At length, the general pause was interrupted by Sir Herbert; who, presenting the notes to his bride, said, this paper, my dear Rose, cannot increase your value in my eyes; nevertheless, I rejoice in your good fortune, since it will enable you to gratify the benevolence of your heart to an extent you might not otherwise have thought prudent. It will,

likewise, convince my friends, if they were sceptical enough to doubt, that your *nurse-like* talents alone are a fortune, since Mr. O'Brian estimated them so highly.' An explanation now took place, and the bride was congratulated on her unexpected legacy."

The family were sociably seated round the tea-table, when Captain Corbett sent in his name. Her Ladyship ordered him to be admitted, when, looking at Fanny, she beheld her countenance flushed with vexation. "I know not, my love," she continued, "how we could in common politeness refuse to receive him; but, if his visit be unpleasant, this shall be a final one." There was time for no more; the Captain entered with well-bred ease, and delivered as many compliments and good wishes from Newland, as though he had really been intrusted with the commission.

Fanny looked stately and distant; but, Mr. Strictland, who was ignorant of her cause for displeasure, and Mrs. Bloomfield, who thought love a venial tresspass,

and attributed his visit to that cause, spoke with ease and complacency. "Pray," said the Widow, "do Lounge and Lillyman still constitute a part of the Duke's household? They are as precious a pair as ever disgraced manhood; you, Corbett, appeared quite a Solomon amongst them." Corbett bowed. "And how is little Auburn?" she continued, "That girl is killed with prettiness and affectation. Is Philippa still laying traps for the Duke's heir?"

"Her traps have not been baited in vain," answered Corbett. "If report speaks truth, the marriage will soon take place, and I think the gentleman and lady worthy of each other."

"You think so?" said the Widow, contemptuously. "By my faith, if Leslie's worth holds no higher estimation than that little spiteful gipsey, I wish they may come together with all my soul. But, you are either a bad judge of human nature, or have some secret motives for depreciating the young fellow, whom I pronounce to be as fair, as open, as generous a character,

as Miss Heathcote is artful, sly, and mischievous."

There is no knowing where the Widow would have stopped, had not the Vicar and his sister just then entered. Corbett was seated with his back to the door, but, rising to pay his respects, Julia, with a piercing shriek, dropped senseless on the carpet. Every eye, except the Vicar's, who thought only of his sister, was turned full upon Corbett. That he was the cause of her terror they could not doubt; and his attempt, during the general consternation, to steal out of the room, fully confirmed it. But this Mrs. Bloomfield prevented. "What! noble Captain!" she exclaimed, "Desert your colours! Run away in the moment of danger! It shall never be said I aided such a cowardly attempt! I, therefore, stop you, in the king's name, until this injured girl is sufficiently recovered to condemn or acquit you."

Julia still remained insensible; and every one, except the Widow, was employed to promote her recovery. She kept strict

guard, and fulfilled her self-appointed task to the great discomfiture and mortification of her prisoner; who never so heartily wished her at the d——l as at this moment. At length, signs of returning life were visible; and, as the suspected culprit was in a situation not to annoy the young lady, on her first recovery, her senses were soon perfectly restored; although a wandering glance shewed her fear of encountering something repulsive. "Who are your eyes in search of, Julia?" said her brother.

No answer. "Is it Captain Corbett?" added the Widow.

"That is not his name," said Julia, faintly.

"I told you so," rejoined Corbett, in an under voice to the Widow. "It cannot be I who alarm the lady, unless she mistakes me for another."

Julia caught the latter part of the sentence, and turning her head, gave another faint shriek, then covering her face with her hands, exclaimed, "Oh, send him away! Let my eyes never again be blasted by the sight of an object so hateful."

"That is Captain Corbett, Julia," said Lady Ann.

"Oh! no, no, no!" replied she. "Not Corbett. The vile seducer's name is Noble; if he calls himself by any other, believe him not."

Mr. Cavendish now thought it necessary to interfere. "Whatever name," said he, addressing Corbett, "you now are known by, you basely betrayed this young woman, my sister, under the name of Noble, and fixed a stigma on a virtuous family no time, no repentance, can wholly obliterate. I know such actions are accounted venial amongst gentlemen of your profession. Gentlemen did I say? The seduction of female innocence is the action of a cowardly assassin, and what no man who deserves the name of gentleman would be capable of. I am a preacher of the blessed gospel,—a minister of peace,—and to that alone you are indebted for your personal safety; for, though I hold *duelling* in abhorrence, under such aggravation I know not that any other reason would be pow-

erful enough to secure you from *manual* chastisement. Lady Ann, I beg your pardon for using such language in your presence, and perhaps to a friend——" "No *friend*, be assured," interrupted her Ladyship. "The circumstances under which you have spoken fully acquit you of impropriety; and, before this respectable company, I desire Captain Corbett to quit the house immediately, and never again presume to intrude where I am mistress, or where my influence extends; for, I shall hold it a bounden duty to publish his character, as a warning to those young women, who are to be caught by a smooth tongue and a specious address."

"Are you prepared to make your bow, noble Captain?" said Mrs. Bloomfield, "Or shall we order the servants to expedite your departure?"

Corbett looked as if he wished himself gone, but was at a loss how; when the Widow continued, "I am going to write to her Grace of Newland, and shall make honourable mention of your adventures at

the Tower of Tremorne; 'twill pave the way famously for your next summer campaign at the Abbey."

Corbett now moved towards the door; but, as if ashamed of such a retreat, he bowed to Lady Ann, and without raising his eyes,—which had been rivetted on the carpet since the beginning of the Vicar's address,—began, in a confused manner, to confess that appearances were against him, but some other opportunity he hoped to convince her Ladyship that—that—

"That you are a villain!" interrupted Mr. Cavendish, thrown off his guard. "Ladies! Can you pardon my intemperate warmth? But, when that man,—that monster I would say,—presumes to defend such conduct, I must be as infamous as he is before I can patiently listen to him. You have received her Ladyship's orders to depart, and I would advise you to obey, without giving me the trouble to enforce them."

"The trouble will be of your own seeking, *pious Sir*," replied Corbett, with a

sneer, "and attended with difficulty and danger. To your profession and these ladies you owe my long forbearance; but, to tempt me further would be to rouse the sleeping lion. For your sake, and from respect to Lady Ann and Miss Fitz-York, I now retire; but, bear in mind, Sir, that if this insolence be repeated, when you have no more powerful protection than your cloth, *that* shall not secure you from my resentment"

He then withdrew, and Mr. Cavendish paced the room in deep meditation. Julia and Fanny were also in a profound reverie; but, Mrs. Bloomfield, anxious to dissipate the general uneasiness, advanced to the former, and taking her hand, said, "Look up, my dear, you have nothing to fear for your brother's safety. Corbett, you may rest assured is a mere Bobadil, all noise and vapour; and, since this meeting would probably have taken place at some period or other, thank heaven it happened on this spot! For, if our good Vicar had not been checked by the company of ladies,

I fear divinity would have been a feeble barrier to his resentment. Lady Ann, for the first time in my life, I propose to finish the evening with a rubber. Mr. Cavendish is too polite to refuse a lady's challenge; and, if he sits opposite to me, I think, without vanity, I can afford him a better subject for contemplation than bully Corbett."

The proposal was agreed to; and, whilst the seniors were engaged at cards, Fanny prevailed on Julia to accompany her to Pine-Lodge, anxious to pay her respects, after a fortnight's absence, to its worthy owner. The Major started on their entrance, for he was that moment engaged in serious meditation on Lady Ann's letter, which lay open before him.

"My dear Major!" said Fanny, advancing, and taking his hand, "I have been five whole hours at Tremorne, and was in hopes you would have anticipated this visit, by coming to the Tower. But, no! your thoughts are engaged on some absent fair, if I may judge by the beauty of that

manuscript, and poor Fanny must yield to the force of superior attraction. But, come! I forgive you, on condition that you return with us, and take your supper with Lady Ann and Mrs. Bloomfield. There will be a *heavenly* lantern to light you home, and my guardian and the good Vicar will be glad of such a reinforcement."

The Major did not feel quite comfortable at the idea of meeting her Ladyship so immediately after his rejection: but Fanny would hear of no refusal; so, placing the letter with a sigh of regret in his writing-desk, he summoned Hassan, and, with a fair lady hanging on each arm, set proudly forward to the Tower. Mr. Gaskell was standing at his gate, as they passed, and cheerfully agreeing to accompany them; they reached the saloon as the whist-players were settling their winnings.

"I have picked up two melancholy isolated beings," said Fanny, as she preceded them into the room; "and have promised them a welcome in the names of Mrs.

Bloomfield and your Ladyship. The Major I found musing over the characters of some unknown female correspondent, and had great difficulty in breaking the spell with which he seemed bound; but our good Mr. Gaskell obeyed my first summons, and here they both are, craving like myself for their suppers."

Had Fanny been in the Major's *confidence*, nothing could have been better contrived than this visit. It broke the ice at once: whereas, being a timid man, he would have stood trembling and quaking at the hazardous attempt, until probably it would have been relinquished altogether. But, seeing nothing repulsive or forbidding in Lady Ann's behaviour; on the contrary, the most unaffected ease and thorough bred politeness, he resumed his natural good humour, and the evening ended much more pleasantly than could have been expected, all things considered."

It will be remembered, that our heroine knew not of the Duke's letter, when Corbett mentioned the immediate union of

Leslie and Philippa, so that the surprise it occasioned was entirely confined to Lady Ann. She, indeed, both wondered and doubted; but Fanny did neither. It was a measure expected, and perhaps the sooner it was concluded the better. To linger in suspense of an imagined evil is infinitely worse than the most positive certainty; for, during the former, hopes mix with our fears,—doubts will creep into the soul, and keep it in a feverish uncertainty;—but, when once calamity is decided,—place it only beyond remedy,—and the mind will brace itself up to endure what we imagined it incapable of sustaining: the well-regulated mind will resist every encroachment that tends to weaken its powers of acting right.

It had never occurred to Lady Ann that it would be prudent or proper to withhold the Duke's letter, until she witnessed the comparative slight emotion Corbett's intelligence produced. Since she heard of the marriage with so little irritation, would there not be a degree of cruelty in produ-

cing a document so opposite in its nature, but which doubtless had been forwarded unknown to the Duchess? and was not Fanny's peace too valuable to be trifled with? These considerations decided her resolution, and the Duke's epistle was consigned to her cabinet.

The next post brought the following letter from Lord Milford.

"Milford-Hall, Oct. 1, 1812.

"I understand, Lady Ann, overtures of peace have been made by Lady Mountcastle, which you, with your usual haughty precipitance, have declined. You acted without proper deliberation, as you generally do; for much honour to your daughter might have resulted from a contrary proceeding.

"The Countess, touched by the condition of Lord Moseley, had nearly brought her mind to sanction his espousals with Frances, when the dash of your proud pen destroyed *his* hopes and *her* expectations. As a daughter of our house, I wish her

properly married, and have no objection to use my influence with Lady Mountcastle to forget your arrogant letter, which would doubtless have been more conciliatory, had you been prepared for this concession in Moseley's favour.

"I desire you will take time for consideration, before you refuse so great a good as this alliance promises. I am not now to be told of your grovelling notions; and it is only for the sake of your daughter, that I condescend to interfere in the business; but it is certainly more desirable, on every account, to marry her to a Lord than to a country Attorney or a village Doctor.

"I remain your Ladyship's friend and brother, if you act properly,

MILFORD."

Lady Ann knew the Earl too well to be astonished at his stile, though she wondered at his condescension in writing at all, since her answers had in general been so little satisfactory. She could not help in-

wardly smiling at Lady Mountcastle's continued duplicity; and could not repress a small degree of surprise, that the late Mr. O'Brian's fortune should be so much an object to people of their reputed wealth, as even to change her sister's nature, and prompt her to make repeated concessions to one she had before treated with the greatest arrogance and disdain. But such conduct, instead of softening, served still further to irritate her, and she returned the following answer.

"Tower of Tremorne,
Oct. 4, 1812.

"My Lord,

"You and I seem to have no two ideas in common. The *honour* to be conferred on Miss Fitz-York, by an alliance with Lord Moseley, I understand not, when applied to your Lordship's niece and my daughter; nor are Fanny's expectations disappointed, since she never formed any to which Lady Mountcastle's sanction was necessary.

"It shall be my care to dispose of a daughter of the house of Milford properly; nor will I accept your Lordship's influence in palliating what you think so offensive in my letter to Lord Mountcastle.

"Pride and arrogance are not the offspring of my own nature, but originate in the pride and arrogance of others; and poor indeed must be that spirit which would not rise and boldly resist oppression, whether moral or political.

"You desire me to reflect, ere I throw away the great *good* that must result to Fanny, from her alliance with a *Lord!* But I am so ignorant,—I wonder I should with two such illustrious examples to the contrary, in my own family,—I am so stupidly ignorant, I say, as to attach no exclusive goodness or virtue to nobility, and think it very possible for a country Attorney or a village Doctor to equal,—perhaps surpass,—them in those qualities which are alone estimable. This you will naturally attribute to my *grovelling notions*, as you politely call them. Be it so. They

are such as my intercourse with the world have taught me; and, as I suppose your Lordship's opinions are derived from the same source, you cannot with justice blame your friend and sister if you *think* properly.

ANN FITZ-YORK."

Looking over the papers, which were always served up at breakfast, Fanny's countenance underwent a change; but, quickly recovering herself, and perceiving Lady Ann's eyes fixed anxiously upon her, she pointed, with a vain attempt to smile, at the heart-rending paragraph; and, having finished her breakfast, left the room. The appalling words announced, in the usual style, the expected marriage of the Honourable Leslie Talbot, presumptive heir to the Duke of Newland, with the beautiful and accomplished Miss Heathcote, niece to the Duchess, with a fortune of fifty thousand pounds! Her Ladyship had scarcely finished the paragraph, when Robert entered, with intelligence that a person had been discovered in a stone

quarry, much bruised and lacerated, and requested to see Mr. Strictland without delay.

"Where is he?" inquired Lady Ann.

"At a public-house, my Lady, about two miles off. Some men found him, as they went to work, dead, as they thought; but, on moving him, they perceived signs of life; and, being put to bed, the first use he made of his recovered speech was to send a messenger hither."

"Who can know me in this country?" said the worthy merchant. "But no matter. Order a couple of horses, Robert, and request Mr. Gossip's presence immediately."

Lady Ann's mind was ever on the stretch of usefulness, and actively alive to promote the peace and happiness of those around her. Fanny and Julia she knew both required employment, to preserve them from too close application to subjects of an unprofitable nature; she therefore discovered several little commissions, which no one could execute to her satisfaction but themselves, in the town where Mr. and Mrs.

Leigh resided. "It will be a pleasant walk," she observed; "Mary will be delighted to see you, and perhaps return with you in the evening."

Fanny never murmured at her mother's arrangements. They were always, she knew, "wisest, discreetest, best;" though, had she consulted her own inclination, *that* would not have prompted an excursion at the present moment. The day was fine, for the season, the walk reviving; Frederick and his wife rejoiced to see them, and Mrs. Carter bustled to make them welcome. Having executed Lady Ann's commissions, they were half way on their return, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Leigh, when a crowd at the door of a solitary public-house, by the road side, attracted their attention. Julia, for they were walking in a row, happened to be the outside pedestrian, and, as they passed, looking accidentally over the shoulders of the populace, she exclaimed, "My God! Is he dead? and rushed into the midst of them.

Corbett, for he was the wounded stranger, lay apparently lifeless, extended on a bier, which was instantly raised, by the command of Mr. Strictland, and borne away. The good merchant then requested Fanny to wait a few minutes, and he would attend her. Mr. and Mrs. Leigh took leave, and our heroine, accompanied by Julia, pale and trembling, entered the house, to wait the leisure of her guardian, who detained them merely to prevent a possibility of overtaking the procession. Julia had not opened her lips since the above exclamation; but, when they were seated in the nicely sanded parlour, she inquired, in tremulous accents, "what had occasioned the unhappy man's death?" Mr. Strictland, who thought there were few hopes of his recovery, did not contradict the idea; but merely related his being found in a stone-quarry, by some labourers, who conveyed him to the house they were then in, "and from hence," he added, "as the nearest village, I have ordered him to be carried to Tremorne." The sub-

ject then dropped, and they proceeded on their walk.

Corbett, when he left the Tower, having neither horse nor carriage, and not enduring to remain in the village, where he supposed his adventure would soon become a theme of universal discussion, determined to walk to the next market town, which was not more than four miles distant, and to which he was told there was a pleasant road across the fields. The evening was drawing in, ere he left the Tower, and before he had proceeded two miles it was nearly dark. To complete his embarrassment, he made a wrong turn at the last stile, and found himself entangled in a kind of underwood, through which there was no direct path. He had just decided to await the rising of the moon, when he was precipitated into the yawning gulph before described, and remained, without power to move, until the dawning light brought workmen to their accustomed labour. A public-house lay across the next field; but a difficulty arose

how to carry him even so far, with his leg and arm shattered; and, besides, so sore with bruises, that he shrieked with anguish at the first attempt to move him. At length, with care and difficulty, the business was accomplished, for he happily fainted when they laid him on the prepared litter, and thus became insensible to the pain this slight exercise must necessarily have produced.

The first use he made of his returning reason was to send for Mr. Strictland, whose resentment he knew would give way to compassion, when he saw the wretched state of the culprit. The good man, we have before said, lost no time in obeying the summons, and, attended by Gossip, reached the place at the moment he was recovering from another fainting fit.

Gossip possessed a considerable degree of practical skill, and found no difficulty in setting the arm; but, until the swelling subsided, an operation upon the leg was impracticable. To insure greater care and attention, he recommended a removal to

his own habitation, and returned home, to send the necessary means, and prepare for his reception. Corbett again lost his senses, on being removed to the bier; and, on his recovery, which was not until he had been some time in his new habitation, expressed such an anxious wish to see Mr. Cavendish, that Gossip thought it best to humour him. The Vicar found him deeply sensible of his situation, and greatly alarmed at the thoughts of leaving this world, without making all the reparation in his power to the young creature he had so greatly injured; for, so tender was conscience, as death seemed to approach, that he took the blame of Julia's ruin entirely on himself, when, the fact is, vanity and thoughtless levity of conduct prepared her, in a great degree, for the mischief which followed.

It would be a disgusting task to follow her through her short career of vice, for Corbett deserted her after a few weeks guilty intercourse. We have before said that disease, contracted by excess of dissipa-

tion, brought on disgust, and a wish to return to her paternal dwelling; but the closing scene of her father's earthly pilgrimage drove her forth once more a wanderer; and, having no virtuous resource to fly to,—because people in her situation are rarely privately encouraged to quit the paths of vice, and of any public institution she was ignorant,—the consequences are obvious. No reputable door opened to receive her,—no friendly hand was stretched forth to raise a fallen sister;—the only houses in which she could seek shelter were those devoted to infamy,—and there she could not enter, without contributing, one way or other, to the public stock.

The scenes previous to her appearance at Burford, we shall not recur to, and of what happened afterwards, our readers are in full possession.

Corbett was comfortably accommodated at Gossip's; and, on the second day, the operation was successfully performed, with every prospect of doing well. Meantime, Mr. Cavendish, by the patient's desire,

made frequent visits; but to his reiterated wish for an interview with Julia, gave a decided negative. "I venture to promise you her entire forgiveness," said the Vicar; "but Julia's peace is very dear to me. She has in a great measure regained it, and there would be unnecessary cruelty in impeding her on the road to happiness. You appear willing to forget her conduct since you parted, and to make her reparation by marriage, but are you sure returning health would not produce new ideas? The bed of sickness and the joyous hours of health present objects so different, that a determination made on the former is too often forgot, or remembered with apathy and disgust. From a possibility of this, I would preserve Julia. Her expectations, at present all centre in peace and usefulness; and, until a sufficient time has elapsed, after your final recovery, to leave no doubt of the sincerity of your determination, I should wish to decline raising her hopes, or appearing to take undue advantage of your present weakness."

The third day after the operation, Gossip had reason to apprehend that the fractured leg was not doing so well as he could wish, and the following morning his suspicions were awfully verified. A mortification had taken place, and nothing could save the patient but amputation. This intelligence, a few days sooner, would have appeared in a form the most dreadful, for Corbett was vain to excess of his person, and frequently boasted that his lower extremities exhibited the perfect line of beauty. The symmetry of his limbs was, however, at the present eventful period overlooked; death was all he dreaded, and could the loss of his boasted leg save him from that, he conceived there would be little to regret.

Again he attacked the Vicar's feelings,—again he begged to call Julia wife,—before the operation, which might put it finally out of his power to do her and her family justice;—the divine's resolution was unshaken. He did not appear to apprehend much vital danger from amputation, "and

if Julia," he concluded, "be doomed to be a widow, as soon as she becomes a wife, 'twere better,—much better for her to retain the name of Cavendish than to harass her feelings by hopes and expectations never to be realized. Submit manfully to the operation, and if, after a sufficient trial of your disposition, you are still anxious for the union, I shall espouse your cause with all the influence I possess."

The limb was taken off, below the knee,—his recovery was rapid,—and, as his thoughts never swerved,—Julia was informed, as tenderly as possible, of Corbett's existence, and the interest her brother had promised to exert in his behalf.

"I hope, my best Henry," she replied, "that you will believe me sincere, when I solemnly declare that were I a solitary being,—a link cut off from society,—I would refuse Corbett. But there is much due to my sister,—to yourself,—and to George and Francis. The family I have injured,—deeply injured by my misconduct, claim all the reparation I can make, were even

my life required to wipe out the stain I have thrown upon them. That I have recovered my peace of mind is your gracious work, and if you think I ought to marry, after what has passed, I readily submit, though I anticipate no happiness from the union."

"Captain Corbett *had*—perhaps has—many great faults," replied the Vicar, "but he appears so truly penitent, and so anxious to restore you to society——"

"If you mean a London society, I must now and ever decline it. A life of retirement is my decided,—my irrevocable determination; and, if I cannot be a wife on those terms, I must remain plain Julia Cavendish, though the name were more infamously notorious than it is."

"I thought Julia," returned the Vicar, "you could sacrifice your *life* to establish the family honour."

"So I would willingly,—cheerfully,—but not my peace of mind; and what peace could I expect, when every acquaintance of my husband's would address me

with a sneer of contempt; and many,—very many individuals unknown to him, point at me with the finger of scorn; or,—which would be ten times more dreadful,—speak to me in the language of wantonness, from thinking it impossible a frail sister could make a good wife. Bear to the Captain my unalterable resolve; say I am devoted to seclusion; but not,—if he have any preference,—the seclusion of Tremorne; for, though I could never be so happy any where else, much I know is due to a husband's choice."

The Vicar lost no time in imparting Julia's determination, and it was finally agreed,—on condition that Mr. Cavendish received a suitable remuneration,—that his sister, as Mrs. Corbett, should remain at the Vicarage, at least for the present; and that the Captain should likewise be accommodated, when he could escape from the duties of his profession, without considering, at the moment, that those duties were for ever at an end, since, by the loss

of his limb, he was rendered incapable of serving his country.

Nothing could be more agreeable to the brother and sister than this arrangement, and the marriage was solemnized at the parish church, with as little eclat as possible, no one attending the bride except her friend Mary Leigh, between whom and Julia a reciprocity of esteem was established, on the solid foundation of services conferred, and received at a moment the most critical. Aunt Susy exerted her culinary skill on the wedding-day, to convince the Captain, — her own words, — "that his wife's family knew how to do the thing handsomely." A marriage feast she thought as essential as a marriage ceremony, and certainly took pains to shew her satisfaction at Julia's change of name.

Lady Ann and her daughter signified their intention of congratulating the new married couple; and, barring some confusion on the Captain's part,—for memory is very arbitrary, — the visit terminated

more pleasantly than could have been expected.

Captain Corbett left Tremorne a few days after the wedding, to shew his mutilated person at the War-office, whilst Julia's change of situation made no alteration in her way of life. Her brother and his children were the first objects of her regard, and to their good her whole attention was devoted; for, though she had married Corbett, in compliance with the imperious calls of duty, the ardent affection she once felt for him lay buried in the tomb of his inconstancy, and other ties—other obligations—usurped its place. Love once quenched seldom revives, perhaps never, if extinguished under the impression of worthlessness and depravity. A conviction of this had too long filled Julia's bosom with contempt, to be easily eradicated; and, though she resolved strictly to perform the character of a wife, the absence of her husband caused sensations more nearly allied to pleasure

than pain, because his presence was a restraint — a hindrance of those duties she determined to persevere in towards Georgiana.

CHAP. V.

THE FEMALES OF GASKELL'S HOUSE,—A BURGLARY,—A FORGERY,—AND AN EXECUTION.

Ensign Taylor made good the vulgar adage, "set a beggar on horseback," &c. The five hundred pounds, given as a marriage portion, by the industry of himself and his thoughtless wife, diminished daily; for the report of his having married a woman of fortune was general throughout the regiment, and money will at all times command society. To give currency to the report, invitations were given to the officers, and treats to the officer's wives. Every latitude was allowed to Grace's love of finery, and to be the leader of fashion,—to eclipse the females of the corps,—was

what her aspiring ambition aimed at. At every place of public amusement, Ensign Taylor and his lady were sure to be foremost; and, as Mrs. Gaskell called her daughter's extravagance an *elegant propensity*, which it would be a pity to curb, especially as she acted her part with so good a grace, neither herself nor her husband gave themselves time to think on the daily diminution of their fortune.

To his other modes of expenditure Taylor now added a daily attendance at the billiard table, and, though he never played himself,—for the best possible reason,—he adopted the gentlemanly practice of betting, in imitation of his superiors, and for the pleasure of exposing, what few of his contemporaries could boast, a well-stored purse; but, having no judgment of the game, he generally left the room a loser. In short, before he had been a husband and an officer six months, his wife's fortune was completely dissipated. He had, besides, contracted debts of honour to the amount of two hundred pounds, and obli-

gations of this nature *must* be discharged, unless the loser can submit to the most opprobrious epithets, or consent to be kicked out of civilized society.

What a strange perversion of the moral system has taken place within a few years! A *gentleman* of *spirit* may ruin his tailor, his shoemaker, his hosier, with impunity, and not, thereby, lessen his credit with his associates; but let him contract a gambling debt, and be either unwilling or unable to pay it, he is posted for a poltroon, and rendered incapable of mixing with *honourable* men. There is something vitally wrong in this, and I trust such conduct is condemned by men of *principle*; for, in this case, *principle* and *honour* have nothing to do in common.

Priscilla had been longer than usual without hearing from her hopeful spouse, and began to reflect on the charms of widowhood, and the more than probability there appeared of stepping before her sister, since a Captain and a Lieutenant had both declared her a *devilish* fine girl,

and voted her husband an insensible puppy for deserting her. To the questions, often put, of who and what he was? she gave various answers. Sometimes he had estates in the West Indies, and was gone to look after them; at others, he held a place under government, but her health would not admit of a London residence; in a word, to lead suspicion from the truth, she told twenty falsehoods, when one, had she persevered in it, would have answered every purpose. But so it is: people who make no scruple of telling one bare-faced untruth too often forget consistency. The mind once familiarized to lying shrinks at no additional falsehood; but, as if one garment was not sufficient to cover the deception, adds another and another, till the original idea is enveloped in such a multiplicity of folds, that the fabricator himself is unable to find the clue.

At length the square-folded letter, with Tom Smith's signature, appeared, for which the postman demanded double pay! This was an unusual circumstance. She had

frequently sent an inclosure, but never yet received one; what then was her surprise when a fifty pound Bank note presented itself? Could it be real? Was it indeed fifty? She looked again,—she spelt the word,—and still the sound returned was *fifty*. All wish for widowhood flew before the fascinating expectation that Tom would yet be able to support her in stile, since he could already remit so handsomely.

The letter, omitting much false orthography and bad spelling, ran thus:—

"My dear Wife,

"Inclosed you have a £50 Bank of England note, which you must immediately get changed, and return me thirty by the next post. If you do this here business properly, I shall soon remit you again; and, in a short time, be able to keep you without troubling that old skin-flint, your father. Do not lose an hour in getting it discounted; and I should advise you to apply to some tradesman, in preference to the Bank, for reasons 'tis need-

less to mention, seeing as how women know nothing of business. This is all from your loving husband to command,

THOS. SMITH.

"P.S. Direct to Mr. Richard Jones, Post-office, Birmingham."

Mrs. Gaskell was little less pleased than her daughter at the unhoped-for inclosure; though the idea of returning the greater part was a galling circumstance, for money was an article much wanted in their establishment. Mr. Gaskell's allowance was liberal, and punctually paid; but, the females of his family had too little prudence and proper pride to preserve them from debt, and the quarterly stipend was always sacrificed ere it came to hand. Since they had possession, Mrs. Gaskell was for keeping the whole; to which Priscilla would have had no objection, had not the hopes held out in Smith's letter convinced her of the bad policy of disappointing him; for, if she punctually performed his bidding this time, perhaps a post or two would

bring double the sum. How the money was acquired neither she nor her mother seemed to consider a matter of any importance, since their vanity and extravagance were gratified; and, having an unsettled account at the silk-mercer's, they posted thither, in hopes, by prompt payment and the sight of a fifty pound bill, to gain further and unlimited credit.

The note was discounted,—the bill discharged,—and the smiling, smirking, unsuspicious dealer received their orders for pelisses of the most fashionable and expensive texture with many thanks for the preference given to his shop.

Still Mrs. Gaskell thought thirty pounds too much to return. "Suppose," said she, "we send twenty—or ten; I dare say, if the truth were known, he expects nothing; indeed, why should he? You have, at time and times, sent him more than the amount of the whole;—a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, and, therefore, I say, let him whistle for the money."

Priscilla was not one jot more consci-

entious than her mother; but she considered, that, by appropriating so inconsiderable a sum, she might lose the chance of one time or other outshining her sister; and, as that was the desire next her heart, she determined not to render the accomplishment of it impossible by disobeying orders Accordingly, an answer was despatched, expressing a hope that few posts would elapse before she was favoured with another token of his remembrance. "This I have endeavoured to deserve," she added, "by my punctuality."

Before she could possibly expect it, another bill to the like amount arrived, *for her sole and separate use;* Smith again recommending her to get it discounted at a shop. "But, perhaps," he added, "you had better not apply to the same person, but distribute your favours." The letter concluded with a promise of seeing her shortly.

In the mean time, Taylor, without consulting either Mrs. Gaskell or her daughter, penned a strong petition to his father-

in-law, without committing himself as a gambler. The cause assigned for pecuniary aid, and that so soon after his last bountiful present, was the error he had been led into by a brother officer, with whom he had become bound for two hundred pounds more than his purse could immediately supply; but, if he, Mr. Gaskell, would kindly advance that sum to relieve his present difficulties, he pledged himself to be guilty of no more imprudencies of that nature.

The return of post brought his own letter under a blank cover, and the Ensign was without other resource than selling his commission. By various shifts he contrived to postpone the payment of his debt, from time to time; but, at length, being obliged to name a day, he fixed on the following Monday, though where the money was to come from he could form not the slightest idea.

Walking, on the London road, in deep meditation, a voice bawled out, "Captain,

are you deaf or in love? If I had not stopped the horses in time, we should have run over you." Turning up his head at this salutation, he perceived a coach heavily laden, the fore horses nearly upon his heels. At the same moment, he was recognized by a person from the top, who hallooed out, "what, Jerry, my boy, is that you? By my faith lad, you had a narrow escape; and, as you don't seem to be perfectly master of yourself, I'll descend and guard you into town."

The speaker accordingly jumped down, and the brother-in-law, for the new comer was the identical Tom Smith, entered into various communications not material to this history. He and Taylor had been acquainted from infancy, and both enlisted on the same day; but Smith, disliking the service, made off with the bounty money, and, hiring himself to a gentleman on the eve of leaving England, escaped the punishment due to his offence. His first master dying abroad, he entered the ser-

vice of Lord Portman, as before related, and had but just left him when he encountered Brierly.

Taylor, on the contrary, steadily pursued a soldier's life, and in due time was promoted; but, though as a serjeant he contrived to live respectably and without debt, when ranked amongst the officers, his increase of pay could not keep pace with his increasing expenses, and his wife's fortune scarcely outlived the honey-moon.

The brothers, without discovering their affinity, for Taylor could never have recognized his old acquaintance in the *Mr. Smith so largely talked of* by Priscilla, adjourned to a remote tavern, where much confidential communication followed.

Amongst other things the Ensign's embarrassments were mentioned, and the necessity there appeared of selling his commission. "'Tis a heart-breaking expedient," continued he, "but I have no other resource, and my close-fisted father-in-law would not advance another guinea to save me from hanging."

Smith begged one night for consideration, and, in the morning he would propose something that might probably obviate the necessity of so disgraceful a measure. Meantime, he requested his arrival might be kept a profound secret; "a caution," he added, "you will see the propriety of when you are acquainted with my reasons."

Taylor was too much elated with the prospect of retaining his rank, not to agree implicitly with the measure required. Three days yet remained before the dreaded Monday: Smith he knew was fertile in expedients; and, if he had aught to propose that could be accomplished in that time, he should look upon him as his guardian angel. On the ensuing morning, impatience carried him to his friend's bedside as soon as day-break, when the latter entered into a more full account of himself than had been deemed necessary at the preceding interview, and finished his narrative, by suggesting a plan which might not only empower him to discharge his debt of honour, but put him in cash, and

by that means enable him to retrieve his former losses.

This argument would have reconciled Taylor, who was a man of weak intellect, to almost any safe means of procuring the money; and, as Smith assured him the risk was trifling, and that, if they failed, he had still another resource, the Ensign acquiesced in the scheme, to forward which it was necessary to procure leave of absence for two days. This was easily accomplished, when his commanding officer understood he was going to visit his father-in-law, by his own particular request, and that the invitation was probably a prelude to future advantages.

Every thing was kept profoundly secret from Mrs. Gaskell and her daughters; and he took leave of his wife, under the plea of a shooting excursion, which would detain him a day or two. He was scarcely gone, when the mother and sister called at her lodgings. They were likewise leaving town for a few days, on a visit to Tremorne, for the avowed purpose of coaxing

Mr. Gaskell out of a few elegant, and to him, as a man, useless articles of furniture, to render their house more fit for the entertainment of visitors; for, since the arrival of the last bank-bill, they had been engaged in castle building to an extent they never before dreamt of; and, as their journey had not money for its object, they doubted not of procuring any thing else with ease.

Grace proposed making a third in the chaise; for, under her mother's auspices, she felt no dread of meeting a justly-incensed father: and, as she should make the best possible report of her husband's general conduct and particular affection towards herself, there was no knowing what good might result from the journey.

Very little time was given to preparation, the chaise having been ordered before the two ladies left home; and, the unexpected, unwished for trio, arrived at Gaskell-house to the no small amazement of its worthy owner. Mrs. Gaskell and Priscilla were received, if not welcomed, with cor-

diality; and, after Grace had dilated on the good qualities of her husband, and acknowledged her fault in marrying without his consent, the olive branch was likewise extended to her.

Mr. and Mrs. Gossip called, as soon as they heard of the ladies arrival; and, to the little prating apothecary they were indebted for all the news and scandal of the village. Amongst which, Rosette's marriage with a young, a handsome, and a wealthy baronet, was the least welcome.

"What could any man of fashion see in that formal old maidish creature, I wonder?" said Mrs. Smith. "But Lady Ann, I suppose, was the match-maker."

"Has she picked up nobody yet for her own baby-faced chit?" inquired Mrs. Taylor.

"Offers in abundance, I am told," said Gossip; but miss, it seems, is in no hurry; eh Becky? By the bye, you have heard of Julia's adventure and marriage."

"Married!" exclaimed the three ladies

in a breath. "Who has been fool enough to take up with the leavings of half the town?" demanded Mrs. Gaskell.

"The identical man who first led her astray," replied Gossip. "'Tis a romantic history, and involves a good deal of the marvellous. Captain Corbett, as report says, for we have nothing else to go by, eh, Becky! came to the Tower deeply in love either with Lady Ann or her daughter, for it has never been properly ascertained which, when Julia and her brother burst into the room, and the Vicar upbraided him with the ruin of his sister. High words followed, and they do say blows,—but that's neither here nor there; in short, the poor Captain left the house in disgrace, and in the dark fell into a pit and broke a leg and an arm. But we soon rectified that business, eh, Becky! by setting the one and amputating the other; so that the gallant Captain stumped upon a wooden supporter to the parish church, and there made an honest woman of Miss

Julia. By the same token, my dear madam, where is your worthy sister, Mrs. Stokes?"

"Oh! name not that injured woman!" replied Mrs. Gaskell, pretending to brush away a tear. "I hope she will yet live to be revenged of all her enemies. How does the Major bear their separation?"

"Faith, madam," answered Gossip, "much better than could be expected. He is all in all at the Tower, and I believe means to venture upon another wife shortly. Eh, Becky?"

"Another wife! whilst my sister is alive! Impossible!"

"So I said. Impossible said I. Did not I, Becky? But they laughed at me, and said, as the man had taken his mare again, the Major was to all intents and purposes a bachelor. In what part of the world is our gallant friend the Captain, madam? I fancy there are few finer fellows of his inches in the army; and I hope I shall live to see him a general."

"Doubt it not, Doctor. Walter is wor-

thy of promotion, and I hope will meet with his deserts."

Mr. Gaskell was absent during this conversation, otherwise Gossip would not have trenched upon any of the subjects introduced; for he was more knave than fool, and knew when to speak and when to be silent, where to praise and where to condemn, as well as any man of his profession. But the worthy magistrate now entered, and the discourse, baiting a little tartness now and then, was less abusive than might have been expected.

After the apothecary and his wife retired, the mother and Priscilla, with well-planned art, opened their battery of attack. There were many articles in the house highly necessary to their comfort, of which Mr. Gaskell scarcely knew the names, much less the uses, and, if he would compliment her and her daughter with them, they should be able to see their friends more to his credit and their own.

The mercenary motive which prompted their visit, once known, met with little

opposition. Rather than be again tormented with their continued presence, he would have given up his house altogether; to part with a few useless articles of furniture was therefore no sacrifice; and he readily promised to send them by the first conveyance to Plymouth. "Pray, Priscilla," he asked, "have you heard lately from the reprobate you forced upon me as a son-in-law?"

"He is no reprobate," replied Mrs. Gaskell, "but a man who will be able to support his wife as becomes your daughter. He has lately remitted her two fifty pound bills, and I doubt not will do very handsomely by her."

"And pray how does he procure the money?"

"That we know nothing about; but I dare say honestly."

"That's more than *I* dare say. Where lives he? What business does he follow?

"Law, papa," said Priscilla, "you ask more questions than either I or mamma can answer. Where he lives, he does not say;

and, if he was to talk about business, he knows we should not understand him, because none of our family ever demeaned themselves by trade of any kind."

"An *honest* trade, Priscilla, can never demean any man. 'Tis professors that disgrace business, not business professors; and, if Smith was a pains-taking, honest, industrious cobbler, I should like him much better, though he never sent his wife a shilling, than to load her with presents got, nobody knows how, and living, nobody knows where. There is always something wrong in mystery; the upright mind has no occasion for it, and the honest man is above it. How do you know but the money thus lavished is procured by unworthy means,—by actions that shun the light?"

"Who is censorious now, Mr. Gaskell?" asked his wife. "In good time, I dare say, he will explain every thing to your satisfaction."

"Never! Any thing a proscribed man can say, under the circumstance of his

being my daughter's husband, will never give *me* satisfaction. 'Tis misery enough to know your son-in-law has a price set upon his head, without expecting me to reap satisfaction from any avowal he can now make. All I ever expect from the alliance, is disgrace and dishonour; and, perhaps, the sooner I am put out of suspense, since come it will, the better. Your husband, Grace, the soldier, it seems wants more money; but, you may tell him from me, he must deserve it before he has it."

"More money, papa! Impossible! The sum you kindly gave us is not half gone yet."

"What friend has he been bound for?"

"None. At least I never heard of any."

"Well, no matter. I turned a deaf ear to his request; for, between my *own* son, and those my daughters have *forced* upon me, I might be brought to beggary if I were weak enough to yield to every application they think fit to make."

"Where is Walter now?" asked his mother.

"The last time I saw him, he was in the

King's Bench prison, in company with his aunt, the woman called Mrs. Stokes."

"My son and sister in prison!" screamed Mrs. Gaskell. "Surely you could not be cruel enough to leave them there!"

"There was no cruelty in the case. They seemed quite happy. The lady in particular said, the situation was much preferable to any thing Tremorne could boast. Walter, I understand, has again joined his regiment; but I never receive a letter from him without a presentiment of misery and disgrace."

The family now retired to rest; Mrs. Gaskell, by her own desire, sleeping in her accustomed bed, which her husband readily relinquished.

The night was dark, and stormy,—the wind whistled through the long lobbies of this antique mansion,—ravens and bats, disturbed by the unexpected tempest, flitted past the narrow casements, which rattled in their frames,—whilst the growling of Tyger, the faithful house-dog, shewed him ill at ease.

Nocturnal depredations were so seldom heard of at Tremorne, that the unsuspecting inhabitants scarcely made a point of fastening their doors, and the mastiff's uneasiness was attributed to the general combustion of the elements.

Mrs. Gaskell's thoughts were too dissipated to admit of sleep. They wandered amidst the incongruous matter detailed by Gossip, and the vexatious intelligence conveyed by her husband. Walter and her sister in prison! How disgraceful! The youth her sanguine imagination had painted as possessing all the courage and discretion of a Wellington, was doomed to nothing but humiliation! His pretty person had once exhibited at Bow-street, and was now, or very lately had been, in mortifying bondage. Beset by vile retainers of the law; and, at the suit of some unfeeling low bred mechanic, the heir of Squire Gaskell was dragged to a loathsome prison.

These unpleasant reflections were interrupted by a buzzing noise in the gallery, as of people whispering. The boards too

creaked beneath the pressure of footsteps, which seemed to be gradually approaching until they stopped at her chamber door. The whispering was then renewed; and, ere she had time to think what part of the family could be so wakeful, the lock slowly turned,—the door was cautiously pushed open,—and two black faces, on which the reflection of a small lantern fully shone, appeared at the threshold. A loud scream escaped her, as she covered herself with the bed-clothes,—the ruffians advanced,—and judging from appearances that the bed only contained one person, and convinced by the scream that person was a female,—one said to the other, in an under voice, "we have mistaken the apartment."

"No, no!" replied a different voice in the same key, "the apartment is right enough, but the owner has kindly absented himself to lessen the difficulty of our undertaking. There stands the cabinet; do you keep that bawling woman still, and I'll undertake to secure the property."

Mr. Gaskell, who lay in a room adjoin-

ing, was awakened by what he conceived to be screams; but, hearing no repetition, on the côntrary, finding every thing quiet, he concluded it a dream; and was composing himself again to sleep, when another shrick, more piercing than the former, made him start out of bed, and run to his own chamber. The door, however, would not yield to his efforts; but, listening, he could hear his wife, in smothered accents, bewailing her hard fate; and likewise distinguish a whisper, which convinced him there were at least two to contend with. He always kept a blunderbuss charged in his room, more from custom than àny real necessity; but that, since he had changed his apartment, was now in the power of the assailants, and, ere he could seek for other weapons, it might be too late to use them. To remain in the lobby without defence was only provoking danger; he, therefore, groped his way into the hall, ere he recollected that a single man had no chance against numbers. Without delay he ran up the back stairs, and rou-

sing the groom and gardener, who quickly procured a light from the kitchen, once more entered the hall; and, charging a couple of guns, ordered the gardener to place himself under the chamber window; and, in case the robbers offered to descend that way, to fire at their legs, but on no account to injure them vitally; whilst he and the groom 'vaited their approach from the chamber door. Once more he attempted to enter, but was again repulsed; and, listening, could hear a sound like the jingling of plate, but not a breathing from his wife.

By this time Priscilla and Grace had joined them; for their feelings were nearer allied to masculine boldness than feminine fear; and, fully informed of their father's suspicions, advised a forcible entry. "You are armed with a sword and John with a fowling-piece," continued his eldest daughter, "and I conceive are a match for any two at least. Grace and I can, by our clamour, make them believe our party stronger than it really is, and perhaps conquer

them by fear, if not by strength." At that moment, the sash was thrown up, and, by the time they supposed the number decreased by one, at least having descended, the four set their shoulders to the door, and after two or three efforts it flew open.

The room was dark,—but the faint light of a lantern shewed one of the villains in the act of stepping from the window; when the firing of a gun from beneath, and seizing the remaining culprit, were the actions of a moment. In the scuffle, the light in the lantern was extinguished; and, fearful of betraying the weakness of their force, the candle had been left in the hall. This the daughter undertook to fetch; and Mrs. Gaskell, hearing the voices of her family, ventured to peep from her hiding place. Meantime, no sound proceeded from the garden to denote what was going forward there; but, the girls returning with a light, discovered a man meanly dressed, of low stature, and slight make. The ladies loudly vociferated for a removal of the sable mask; but to this Mr. Gaskell

objected, on the score of delicacy, not wishing the females of his family to appear in a court of justice to swear against the life of a fellow-creature. He and John therefore removed him to a remote apartment, whilst Mrs. Gaskell and her daughters opened the plate chest, and discovered an empty void. Cups, tankards, spoons, and the costly appendages of the tea-table were all gone; the cabinet too was completely ransacked; and they were bewailing the loss, when Mr. Gaskell entered, and, with a stern countenance, inquired of Grace how she had disposed of the family ring belonging to her late grandfather? Grace turned pale, but instantly recovering her self-command, replied, "I seldom wear the old fashioned relic, and left it locked up in my jewel box, at Plymouth."

"You are certain you left it there?"

"Decidedly."

"Then the villains who have been foiled in their attempts to rob me have been more successful at Plymouth; for the ring which William forced from the finger of

the rascal who escaped, I can safely swear is the one worn by my late respected father."

Grace's countenance did not alone undergo a change; she trembled with apprehension of she knew not what; for Ensign Taylor's finger had never been without the ring, since he commenced gentleman. Could he have been careless enough to lose it? Or had he been robbed? Her mother and sister participated in her feelings; for Mr. Gaskell valued the bawble beyond any thing in his possession, and blamed his father for bestowing it on a giddy girl. "Mrs. Gaskell," continued the magistrate, "Priscilla,—Grace,—how have I deserved from you, collectively or separately, the cruel return I have this night met with? My indulgence to you all has been proverbial; and our separation, for which I alone bear the blame, was more to gratify you than myself; although I confess my home has been a scene of quietness, unknown whilst you remained in it. How have I deserved, I repeat, that you should league yourselves with a band of midnight

ruffians,—of desperate house-breakers,—to force from me what I prudently refused to solicitation?"

"League ourselves!" replied Mrs. Gaskell. "You cannot suppose that we know any thing of the robbery."

"How can I suppose otherwise? Your coming so unexpectedly to Tremorne, at the critical moment,—your request to sleep in my apartment,—your partiality to the villain now below——"

"Villain! What villain?"

"Tom Smith!—your hopeful son-in-law!—and Priscilla's husband!"

Priscilla gave a loud scream, and fell senseless on the bed. Mrs. Gaskell flew to her daughter; but her husband, unmindful of either, proceeded—"Tell me, Grace,—honestly and candidly tell me,—in whose possession you left your ring? For I entirely disbelieve what you before said."

Grace, finding there was nothing to be gained by subterfuge, replied, "my husband—the Ensign—has worn it ever since our marriage."

"And where left you him?"

"He quitted home about an hour before I did, on a shooting excursion."

"Enough. The business is fully explained."

"Not if you suppose we knew any thing about the robbery. At least, I can vouch for my own innocence, and I doubt not for that of my mother and sister. As to Smith, Priscilla has never seen him, to my knowledge, since he left Tremorne, and Taylor knows him not; therefore, judge of us all as charitably as circumstances will permit."

"I will suspend *all* judgment till I have conversed further with the wretched man below." He then left the room, and joined his two servants, who held Smith in durance.

William fired at the descending robber, according to his instructions, who, through fright, lost his hold of the suspended rope, and, in falling, dropped the bag containing their ill-acquired booty; but, more frightened than hurt, was instantly on his

legs, and, being a much stouter man than his opponent, broke from him with the loss of his ring, which, in the scuffle, William accidentally drew from his finger.

After dismissing the servants, Mr. Gaskell again interrogated Smith, concerning his accomplice, but to all his questions respecting identity, he maintained a profound silence. In vain the magistrate reasoned and argued, and assured him of the insufficiency of his silence to protect the culprit; "he is known," he continued, "and therefore——"

"You have no occasion to *pump* me," interrupted Smith. "But he is *not* known,—'tis impossible he *should*,—and I have too much honour to *peach*."

"Honour!" repeated the magistrate, with a sneer.

"Yes. Has your worship lived to these years, without hearing the old adage, 'honour amongst thieves?' We never betray a brother."

"Brother! That is a direct confession."

"Of what?"

"Your accomplice."

"Your worship must be a cleverer man than I take you to be, if you find him out by that. I have too many brothers in the same line, for my words to point out an individual."

"This subterfuge will not avail. Your confederate is not only a brother in iniquity, but one by ties, at which I blush."

"Then he is better known to you than he is to me, for I am ignorant of any relationship between us."

"Would I were so too. Were my miserable wife, and more miserable daughters, acquainted with the intended robbery?"

"How should they? I have never seen any of your family since I left this place, after my marriage."

"Then you know not of their being now in the house?"

"I know nothing about them,—but I suppose they are here. Where else should they be?"

"Have you been at Plymouth lately?"

"That I shall not answer."

"You need not fear me. I have too much at stake to bring you to the gallows."

"Will you aid my escape to a foreign country, and promise not to prosecute my accomplice, if I make a full confession?"

"I will.—I must for the sake of my family."

Smith now acknowledged that an officer, named Taylor, was his associate; but that he firmly believed this was his first crime against the laws of his country.

"Do you know that Taylor is married?" inquired Mr. Gaskell.

"Yes."

"And to whom?"

"No. He merely told me he had married the daughter of a covetous rich old Hunks, who thought he did great things by giving him five hundred pounds as a bridal present."

"And who first proposed the robbery?"

"I was the sole instigator, though I had no great difficulty in persuading him to join me, because he had involved his affairs by gambling, and had no other way

of redeeming them, except by the sale of his commission."

"You informed him, I suppose, whose house you intended to attack?"

"Oh, yes. I put him up to that in every particular, and then he seemed to enter into the business with more spirit; though why, I could not guess."

"Ungrateful wretch! He not only sought to rob me of my property, but probably my life. Had I not, by accident, changed my room, the unhappy being, who gave life to both your wives, might have fallen a sacrifice to unprincipled villany and avarice."

"Both our wives!" exclaimed Smith, with undissembled surprise. "Did Taylor also marry your daughter?"

"He did,—he did! Fatal was the hour in which I begot the vipers, who now sting me to death. But strict-handed justice punishes our offences, even in this world. Had I not yielded to temptation, in the early part of my life, and, by way of reparation, married a woman without one requisite to

constitute connubial or parental happiness, this had never happened. The children of this unfortunate union are my curse! Since they arrived to years to know good from evil, they never elicited one sensation in my bosom that was not painful, or introduced a connection that did not cover me with confusion. But something too much of this. I have been unthinkingly led to speak of my vexations, and all I have to request is, that you will forget the communication was ever made."

"I shall certainly not remember it to your disadvantage, since you generously promise to assist me in leaving the kingdom."

"But, provided I supply you with money to convey you abroad, how can I be assured that you *will* go,—or going,—not *return*, to bring fresh shame upon me and mine?"

"If you knew my real situation, you would have no dread of the former; and, once beyond the reach of English laws, few circumstances could tempt me to throw myself again into their power."

"I wish Taylor would likewise consent to leave England."

'He has not the cause that I have; but I imagine a threat of bringing him to justice would act as a powerful stimulent."

"I'll write to him immediately; but, till I receive an answer, you must remain in my custody."

"Willingly. Provided you pledge yourself not to betray me, or give me up to the hell-hounds of justice, should they get scent of my being here."

"The reputation of my house will be your greatest security."

"Perhaps not. But give me your solemn promise not to betray me, and I swear, by my hopes of hereafter, never to trouble you or yours again. Why do you hesitate? 'Tis very unlikely you should be put to the test; but, some how, I should feel more comfortable under that assurance, and on no other terms will I consent to go abroad, since you tell me I have nothing to fear for this frolic."

"'Tis hard to make conditions with a house-breaker! but I am so every way beset, that I must agree to your terms."

Mr. Gaskell instantly wrote to Taylor, and offered pardon for his offence, provided he left the country immediately. But, if he was found at Plymouth, at the expiration of seven days, the which he should detain his daughter at Tremorne, his affinity to her should not prevent his exposing the late transaction. If, on the contrary, he would enter into articles of separation, and quit the kingdom, he would place a hundred pounds in the hands of his banker, to be remitted when he arrived at any foreign port.

Taylor made his escape, smarting under the pain of his wounds, for several shot had lodged in his right leg, and he had more than a mile to walk ere he could reach the place where the horses waited. The fate of his companion gave him not a moment's concern, otherwise than as it might lead to a detection of himself; and, as they had exchanged a promise not to

betray each other, conceived himself tolerably secure on that score. Could he have carried off the booty, they had run such risk to procure, he would have thought a few flesh wounds cheaply purchased; but to return with nothing but defeat, and possibly discovery, created a sensation at once painful and mortifying.

When arrived at his lodging, on the following day, great was his astonishment to find his wife gone with her mother and sister to Tremorne. They were in the house then at the moment of attack, and it was to the screams of one of them they owed their defeat. "Cursed chance!" he exclaimed. "What could carry the plot-spoiling, mischief-making Jezebels home at that critical period? They could have no suspicion of our designs! But women were and always will be meddlers."

A cause was readily assigned to the surgeon who dressed his wounds, and next morning Mr. Gaskell's letter arrived. He read the contents with a mixture of pleasure and mortification, but the former was

predominant, for did it not promise to bury the disgraceful transaction in oblivion? But the conditions,—to lose his lately acquired character of gentleman! To forego his rank, and leave his native country!—his wife was a secondary consideration. But, during the allotted seven days, he would dispose of his commission, and, under a plea not to be controverted,—namely, his father-in-law's desire. With the price of that, and Mr. Gaskell's promised hundred pounds, his handsome person might gain, in a foreign country, a wife richer and fairer than the one he left behind.

These considerations made him no less anxious to leave Plymouth than Mr. Gaskell; and, sending for the army-agent, who happened fortunately to be upon the spot, he settled every thing to his own satisfaction, and wrote to Tremorne, in answer, "that matters were in a fair train for his leaving the country,—that he was willing to sign articles of separation,—and that Mr. Gaskell should hear from him the moment he landed at Cadiz, to which port

he meant to steer; and hoped to serve his country more effectually, by joining the Spanish Patriots, than by remaining inactive at home."

Whilst his wounds were healing, and the sale of the commission negociating, Mrs. Gaskell and her eldest daughter returned to their house, and were planning a smart entertainment, unmindful of what had passed, or was likely to happen, when Mr. Sarsnet, the silk-mercer, bounded into the room, not with his usual smirking bow, and conciliating smile; he advanced with a bold look of haughty defiance, and, addressing Mrs. Smith, desired to know "how she became possessed of the fifty pound bill he had discounted?" Both mother and daughter looked indignant. At length, the latter replied, "such question to me can scarcely be pardoned, much less answered."

"It must be both pardoned and answered," he rejoined, "or consequences the most dreadful may ensue."

"What mean you, man?" inquired Priscilla.

"I mean, that the bill is a forgery, and your own safety requires that you give the most satisfactory answer to my question, otherwise you may be involved in a very unpleasant dilemma."

"Nothing," said Mrs. Smith, "can be more unpleasant to me than your conversation. Do you suppose *I* forged it?"

"Not exactly," replied the shopkeeper. "Ladies, to do them justice, are seldom clever enough to commit enormities of that nature; but to *utter* a forged note is death by our laws, and many a woman has swung for it."

"Your malice, fellow, will never be gratified by seeing my daughter swing," said Mrs. Gaskell. "I can take my oath that she received the bill from her husband."

"Who is he?" inquired Sarsnet. "And where to be found?"

"Who he is,—except as the son-in-law of 'Squire Gaskell, of Tremorne,—can be

of very little consequence to you," replied Priscilla. "He was there very lately on a visit, and——"

"But he is not there *now* you know, my dear," said her mother, with a look which the silk-mercer understood, perhaps better than she to whom it was meant to convey that she had said more than prudence allowed. "He left Tremorne, you know, with an intention of going abroad," added Mrs. Gaskell.

This was not spoken with the easy unembarrassed air of truth. There was labour and design both in the words and the glance which accompanied them: the tradesman was more conversant with the world than either mother or daughter, and not to be duped by so palpable an artifice. He left them abruptly, and, seeking a magistrate, laid the forgery and his suspicions before him. The consequence was, that legal people were despatched to Tremorne, where there was no doubt of finding some one able to identify the person of Smith, in case he should still remain, which

Sarsnet did not scruple to believe was the fact.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Gaskell loudly exclaimed against her daughter's imprudence. "Why mention his being at Tremorne at all, unless you wish to direct their search? You don't, I believe, care three farthings about the man, but it would be no very desirable thing to appear in the world as the widow of a malefactor; and, I am afraid, all things considered, the notes he sent you were not honestly acquired,—if he can be acquitted of the forgery." After a good deal of consultation, it was decided to send off a special messenger, to warn him of the approaching danger, and to advise immediate flight, unless he could prove himself guiltless.

This expedient was put in immediate execution, and a letter, directed to Smith, was delivered to Mr. Gaskell. The worthy man, on any other occasion, would have scorned the meanness of opening a letter not addressed to himself; but the honour of his family, and the suspicion which na-

turally arose from a packet, forwarded as this had been, led him to conclude there was some mystery, if not mischief, in agitation. Without ceremony he therefore broke the seal, and, to his no small surprise and mortification, read as follows:

"The first bill you sent me has been declared a forgery, and I, in consequence, treated by the low-bred dealer in silks most ungenteelly. If you are the guilty person, abscond; for no means will be left untried to bring you to justice. I dread every knock at the door, expecting a like unpleasant visit, from the linen-draper; for, if you are guilty respecting one, there is, I fear, little reason to hope the other is a true bill. My mother is filled with rage and resentment, and would, I am sure, rejoice to see you hanged, if her daughter could escape the ignominy of such a connection.

"Tell Grace, Taylor has sold his commission, and sets out to-morrow on his route to Spain. Who knows but that she may

be a widow without reproach! Would I were so. Suppose you were to join him. I am told the Spaniards have embarked in a glorious cause, and any death is preferable to hanging,—at least to the surviving wife.

PRISCILLA S——."

"And have I," thought Mr. Gaskell, "promised protection to a man guilty of a crime the laws agree never to pardon? How shall I compromise with my conscience or my country? To the former I am bound beyond this life, and the latter loudly calls for justice on so atrocious an offender. To steer clear of crime to both is impossible; and to give him up I should involve myself both as a man of honour and a Christian."

These and other reflections of the same nature, not necessary to repeat, ended by a visit to the prisoner, to whom he gave his wife's letter, and told him he was at liberty to depart. "But, mark me, young man," he added, "I release you, not from

fear of involving me or mine in your disgrace, though, whilst I conceived myself alone injured, I own that had too much weight. But now you are more than *suspected* of a crime, fatal to the mercantile interest of the country,—a crime never pardoned by the laws of the land,—I set all selfish considerations aside, and should most scrupulously act as my duty to society requires, had not you artfully, by stratagem, obtained a promise of protection. An honest man's word is his bond; to that I yield. Go, therefore, I repeat, without molestation; but my protection extends not beyond this house. Once more restored to the world, you are amenable to its laws; and, though I shall not seek you, if you throw yourself in my way, I shall assuredly deliver you up to the punishment you deserve. The officers of justice may even now be in search of you,—though I have no certainty that they are,—but, not to involve me in falsehood,—a vice both mean and despicable,—you must instantly away. I will conduct you

to the outside of my habitation, but that is all, and perhaps more than you ought to expect."

Smith's eyes were fixed upon his wife's letter during the whole of this speech. At its conclusion, Mr. Gaskell advanced to the door, expecting his son-in-law to follow, but he still retained his seat, and, upon a motion from the magistrate, replied, "if the officers are already in search of me, why should I meet danger? Under this roof I am safe, and here I remain, until their vigilance be somewhat cooled. Your character defies all suspicion of connivance, and, as no one here has seen me, except my two jailors, who are fortunately new comers, no inquiry can trace me, if you manfully face it out."

"If you mean by *manfully facing it out*, to be guilty of falsehood, in order to screen you, I must refuse to give you security on those terms. My integrity has hitherto been unimpeached; and do you suppose me base enough to sacrifice it for one so worthless?"

"I pay you a compliment in supposing you *honourable enough* to *keep* your *word* with me."

"I have given you notice of danger, and offered to facilitate your escape; my word was never meant to extend beyond that."

"You talk of escape, without providing the means."

"True! In the agitation of my mind I forgot that. Here is a hundred pounds," taking a Bank note from his pocket book, "and may you never acquire another by less honest means."

"This will do in *part;* but I must have five hundred more, as my wife's portion,—the sum you gave Taylor."

"You *must.* What if I refuse?"

"Then here I stay, and give me up at your peril. Your puny conscience would start at the violation of your word, and that has been solemnly pledged not to betray me."

"I surely meant to act right, yet never man involved himself as I have done, from

laudable motives. How to decide, I know not; for, to be threatened,—bullied out of my property——"

"I ask nothing but justice. The portion of one daughter ought to be the portion of the other."

"Well, well. give me a receipt in full of all demands upon me, or Priscilla, and I'll write you an order upon my banker, at Exeter."

Smith objected to this mode, as likely to lead to a discovery of his person. Accordingly it was agreed that five hundred pounds should be sent to an appointed place in London. Mr. Gaskell then, first taking care that the servants who knew his person should be out of the way, conducted him through the hall, and had opened the back door, as the more secret way of migration, when two men appeared on the outside, and demanded the body of Thomas Smith. A third man, who rather stood aloof, now advanced, and, pointing to the culprit, declared him to be the person they sought. "I assisted at the wed-

ding of Miss Gaskell," he added, "and will take my oath in any court in Christendom that that man is her husband, and married her by the name of Thomas Smith."

All Mr. Gaskell's plans were now rendered abortive. Smith was seized and conveyed to Exeter jail, where he languished until the spring assizes, and was then condemned and executed, chiefly upon the evidence of his own wife; who, to exonerate herself, was compelled to appear against the man she had rashly vowed to love, honour, and obey. Taylor, on the contrary, after selling his commission, proceeded to Spain, and was in the list of the killed at the memorable siege of Badajos.

The two widows and their mother, after Smith's execution, retired to Penzance, in Cornwall, where they kept up a kind of reflected consequence, derived from the lustre of Mr. Gaskell's virtues. His respectability,—his riches,—were exhaustless themes. The man to whom they could not allow one merit when they lived under

the same roof, pride and vanity made them now extol, as something more than mortal,—something it was an honour to be allied to.

Such is ever the conduct of those, who, having no light in themselves, endeavour to shine with borrowed lustre; and such the superiority which virtue will always maintain over vice. Thus, the women of Mr. Gaskell's family, though they wished the little world about Penzance to believe them all perfection, were painfully conscious that they owed all their *real* respectability to the husband and father, whose life they had taken every means to render uncomfortable; they knew,—they felt their own comparative littleness, and tacitly acknowledged the goodness they could not imitate.

CHAP. VI.

THE RELAPSE, — ONE MISTAKE BEGETS MANY, — FEMALE ARTIFICE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

Captain Corbett left Tremorne perfectly satisfied with his marriage, and in entire good humour with himself. He had repaired the wrongs of an injured female, and by so doing silenced the scruples of his conscience, appalled at the near approach of death. He painted scenes of quiet domestic peace, to which he had hitherto been a stranger; scenes peculiarly recommended by novelty, and the alteration in his once boasted person. But, alas! the company of his old associates soon brought his ideas to their former level. They laughed him out of the little

virtue he possessed, and rallied the fears which led him to commit matrimony with a woman, many of them had seen in her former degraded situation, and some of them intimately known.

Corbett wanted that strength of mind which could alone have borne him up against the tide of ridicule. The sneers and scoffs of his contemporaries in vice and folly were more than his weak head could withstand; and, though a late transaction,—a transaction he now blushed for,—could never be recalled, he resolved to leave Julia in quiet possession of his name, without indulging her with his company.

Had he been truly informed respecting his wife's feelings, he would have known that this was the greatest favour he could have conferred. But, not supposing it possible that the woman he had honoured with legal claims could behold him with indifference, this determination was little less cruel than his former conduct, and shewed a heart callous to every feeling of humanity. Previous, however, to this

counter-revolution in his principles, and whilst virtue had yet her proper ascendency, he favoured Julia with a letter, filled with assurances of eternal fidelity. By way of postscript, he added, "I wish I had solicited an interview with Miss Fitz-York before my departure. I have to intreat her pardon for very reprehensible conduct at Newland; but hope a short delay will not diminish her willingness to forgive, since it will still further convince her of my general penitence."

Had Fanny, to whom Julia shewed this paragraph, suspected any collusion between the writer and Miss Heathcote, or the scene of duplicity he meant to unravel, she would have been as anxious to hear as he was to disclose; but, supposing it merely referred to several impertinencies he had been guilty of, she felt no solicitude about it, either at that time or afterwards.

For several days, when he was not engaged at the War-office, time hung with leaden weight upon Corbett's hands. His reformation, the work of fear rather than

conviction, now the dread of death no longer appalled him, took a retrograde direction; though, had he remained amid the virtuous society of Tremorne, 'tis possible the seeds of penitence might have taken root, and flourished with comeliness and vigour. But thrown again in the way of temptation, with principles too weak to resist evil, he became once more a willing victim at the shrine of falsehood and hypocrisy. Would, for the credit of human nature, we could say, he stopped here! But, as it is impossible to say, "thus far will I go and no farther," the first deviation from the path of rectitude,—since one vice naturally begets another,—should be carefully guarded against, for we know not whither it may lead us.

No human being becomes vicious on a sudden; and the probability exists, that the worst of criminals once started at the very shadow of vice, but wanted strength of mind to resist the first inroads of temptation.

During a solitary promenade in the now

deserted Park, where the wind whistled amongst the leafless branches, Corbett, for the first time since his marriage, began seriously to see the folly of it. He had made himself the laughing-stock of his military friends, without increasing his own happiness, or her's for whom the sacrifice was made. Here ended all his visionary plans of uniting himself to some rich heiress,—virtuous as rich,—and with beauty equal to either. Fanny Fitz-York's image then presented itself in all the captivating loveliness of unresisting youth. 'Tis true, she had hitherto scorned him, but was not that more his own fault than any real dislike in her? During their intercourse, he had rather endeavoured to flatter her vanity than seriously to gain her affections! "Cursed chance!" he mentally exclaimed, "which brought that meddling parson and his sister to the Tower! But for their *mal-a-propos* appearance I could have confirmed the favourable opinion of Lady Ann and Mr. Strictland, and, by that means, ,conquered the scruples of the

ever-dutiful Fanny; nor would this cork supporter rise in judgment against me. Instead of disgracefully flying their society, and skulking like a culprit in the dark, rambling through unknown paths, and tumbling headlong into a pit, I should, by time and perseverance, have led the lovely heiress,—'nothing loth,' to the temple of Hymen, and have been the envy of all my acquaintance, as I am now their scorn."

At the conclusion of this soliloquy he ran against a female, who seemed by her inattention to be as deeply involved in meditation as himself. A faint scream was followed by a perfect recognition. "Corbett!" "Miss Heathcote!" each exclaimed at the same moment; "who could have thought of stumbling upon you?" continued Philippa.

"You may well say stumbling," replied Corbett. "I hope I have not hurt you by my carelessness?"

"Not at all. But what was the subject of your cogitation?"

"Matrimony. By the same token, have you brought Leslie to capitulate?"

—"Not yet. The enemy still keeps possession of the citadel. Could we once dislodge her, I should have no doubt of a surrender. I was in hopes you would have made a diversion in my favour; but your journey into Devonshire has been unavailing, I see by your rueful looks. No hopes of a wedding, hey?"

"I *am* married."

"Married, say you? When? Where?"

"A month ago. At Tremorne."

"Married! and mention it thus calmly! Why, man, your wife might be somebody's cast off mistress, instead of the beautiful, —the all-conquering, Fanny! But see, Leslie—now my own Leslie approaches. He was coming to town for a day or two; and, the Duchess having a few commissions she wished me to execute, I occupied the vacant seat in his curricle. But when will you call upon me? There's my card; I long to hear the history of your court-

ship, and hope you give me ample credit for spurring you on to the pursuit."

The mention of a "cast off mistress" struck Corbett dumb Whatever intention he might have had to be communicative was entirely frustrated by the baleful words; and he took leave, with a promise he never intended to fulfil, of calling at her lodgings in the evening.

Every hour added an item to the sum total of his mortifications. The laugh and ridicule of his friends might have been borne with some degree of good humour, had not the evil which excited them been past remedy. But, no attempt to join in the laugh,—no effort at raillery could annul his present marriage, or give him the most distant hope of forming another, more congenial with his pride and ambition. The amputation, which, by humbling his vanity, had laid the foundation for these now detested nuptials, was followed by no consequences materially injurious to his appearance; the well-shaped cork leg

had so imposing an effect, that symmetry, on which he prided himself, had scarcely suffered by the substitution; having recovered his usual glow of health, too, he once more fancied himself irresistible, and execrated the candour which had unthinkingly declared him a married man.

Philippa and Leslie were no sooner alone than she informed him of Fanny's nuptials; adding, "Corbett has foiled all Lady Ann's ambitious projects to match her daughter nobly; for Fanny, with native rusticity, preferred love and a pad-nag to indifference and a coach and six. She found Corbett's handsome person irresistible at last, though I must say, she did her utmost whilst at Newland to conquer the growing partiality."

Philippa might have proceeded much longer without interruption, for Leslie received a shock from the former part of her intelligence, that nearly paralyzed his faculties; nor were his feelings merely personal. That Miss Fitz-York should marry was a matter of no surprise, though it was

one of extreme regret; and, the intelligence that such an event had actually taken place would have been borne with philosophic patience, at least, so he flattered himself,—had her choice fallen upon a man, whose intellect bore any proportion to his person. That was cast in nature's finished mould; the casket was fair to look upon, but no gems were found within. And could Fanny, whose mind glowed with intelligence,—in whose bosom candour, simplicity, and all the moral virtues, reigned triumphant,—could she be happy in the constant society of a shallow-pated coxcomb,—an unblushing libertine? Impossible! Yet such was the choice she had made, and thus was verified an observation he had frequently heard, but never before credited, that people commonly attach themselves to characters the most opposite; and light and darkness, virtue and vice, were not less in unison than Captain Corbett and Fanny Fitz-York.

Whilst these thoughts were passing, Philippa observed him earnestly, but main-

tained a profound silence. At length, he heaved a deep sigh, and in tremulous accents and an under voice, as if addressing himself rather than his companion, said, "had the lovely girl purchased happiness, I hope I should not selfishly repine at the mortifying preference; for, though my own peace be for ever destroyed, the anguish of my heart would not be quite complete, could I contemplate the domestic felicity of its worshipped idol. But vain is every hope that tends to that point; and transient will be the delusion of her, who has sought connubial happiness with one incapable of bestowing it. Is Fanny —I mean is Mrs. Corbett—in town?"

"My interview with the Captain was so short I had not time to inquire into particulars; but he promised to call this evening, when I shall make myself mistress of every circumstance."

"As you please. I shall be on my road to Newland within the hour."

"Indeed! I thought you intended a short excursion."

"To what end should I now visit Devonshire, except to augment my misery? Had I followed my own plans, at an earlier period, this heavy stroke might have been averted; but, now to seek her society would be the action of a maniac. Are you ready to accompany me into Oxfordshire?"

"The business for which I come is not completed; if you stay till Thursday——"

"I'll not stay an hour. Wherefore should I? To meet *him* in my present frame of mind might be dangerous,—to see *her*—distraction. Farewell I shall probably be many miles from Newland ere you return, for to remain in a place grown hateful, by the retrospect of past happiness, would require an effort my powers are unequal to." At the conclusion of these words, he rushed through the Horse-Guards and was out of sight in a moment.

Philippa, thus unexpectedly deserted, was not in a very enviable situation. The intelligence which she expected to convert to her own use, by filling Leslie's bosom with rage against Fanny, and thereby

opening an avenue through which she might make a direct approach to his heart, had failed in the very onset. Yet the bare possibility that she should ultimately carry her point, kept her spirits from sinking and endued her with perseverance.

The unexpected sight of Leslie filled the mind of Corbett with the most envious sensations. Not so much on account of his rank and endowments, as because he was a single man, and at liberty to seek, with honour, the female an unlucky chance had alone, he thought, deprived him of. When he approached near enough to recognize Philippa's companion, the distant bow with which he greeted him,—the repulsive coldness of manner he knew so well how to assume towards those he thought unworthy of his regard,—added rage to the envy which before possessed Corbett; and, he determined to throw, at least, one more stumbling block in the way of his addresses; or, more properly speaking, to persevere in the plans he and Philippa had before practised at Newland.

For, though his expectations of ultimately preventing the alliance seemed very distant and obscure, he resolved to retard it, in hopes fortune would release him from the bonds he had prematurely forged; or, if that happiness were denied him, chance might second his endeavours to frustrate Leslie's plans, by marrying Fanny elsewhere, if she believed her lover already disposed of.

Fully bent on this nefarious scheme, he hastened to his lodgings, and penned the following artful letter to his wife.

London, Dec. 30, 1812.

"Dear Julia,

"I am thwarted in the pleasure I anticipated of passing a quiet winter with you, at Tremorne, by an abscess formed just above the place where I suffered amputation; and shall be confined under the surgeon's hands for several weeks, if, indeed, it will ever be quite cured. We must not, however, repine at this trial of patience, but submit as cheerfully as we can to the

decrees of Providence. Make my respectful devoirs to Miss Fitz-York, and tell her I met young Talbot and Miss Heathcote yesterday, in the Park. They are only in town for a few days to purchase finery preparatory to their nuptials. The rest of the Duke's household are well, and continue at Newland. I once thought her Grace's plans, for they are evidently her's, would have been defeated; but Leslie is so much attached to his family, that any wish of theirs is to him a law. This may, in some respects, be worthy of praise, but it betrays an apathy I never could imitate. Remember me to every friend, and believe me, dear Julia, your faithful

CORBETT."

"P.S. Do not mention the abscess; but say business detains me."

Talbot's unexpected return, for "he had wrung from the Duke his slow leave" to visit Devonshire, in order to obtain a solution of the mystery Lady Ann's letter contained, and to decide his own fate as far as

regarded Fanny, filled the Newland circle, now confined to a family party, with astonishment; not lessened when they beheld the paleness of his visage and the despondency of his looks.

"My dear Leslie," exclaimed the Duke, "what's the matter? Are you not well?

"Thank you, my good uncle: well in health."

"What urgent occasion brought you back, your errand unperformed?" inquired the Duchess. "Nothing has happened to Philippa, I hope?"

"I left her well."

"Come, come, Leslie," said the Duke, impatiently, "trifle not with those who love you; dismiss the laconic, and relieve our suspense by a frank confession. Did you meet Lady Ann Fitz-York's family in town?"

"I met the husband of Miss Fitz-York; after that confession, you will not wonder if I had no wish to see the rest of the family."

"Fanny married!" exclaimed all the females in a breath.

"Miss Fitz-York a wife!" said the Duke, in amazement. "I am astonished!"

"And I undone!" rejoined Leslie, with a deep sigh. "Rendered miserable, without even the negative consolation which would result from a conviction of her happiness; for happy such a mind as Fanny's can never be, united to a man of Corbett's habits and opinions."

"Corbett!" repeated his Grace. "Is he the husband of her choice?"

"He is her husband," replied Leslie, "by some strange fatality. To suppose her choice decided the connexion would be a libel on her understanding. Duty must have had more than its proper influence in forwarding the union."

"And yet, that a female of Lady Ann's discernment," interrupted the Duchess, "should have so biassed her daughter, is to admit of something contradictory to her well known character. But, since the matter is now past recall, we can only conclude, that the most sensible women have their weaknesses, and that her Ladyship

has been deceived by Corbett's plausible manners."

"Then you allow nothing," said Lady Sidney, "to the really beautiful person of Corbett. To a youthful female, his handsome face and graceful figure might be some excuse for the rash action you seem unanimously to condemn."

"With many girls," replied her Grace, "these advantages would be irresistible. With you, for instance, Sidney, they might perhaps have more sway than they ought; and, if we believe Miss Fitz-York actuated by the same weakness, we shall the less regret our Leslie's loss."

Young Talbot was buried in deep reflection, when the Duke's gentleman entered with letters. Her Grace was engaged in the perusal of one from Lady Milford, when she rapturously exclaimed, "courage, Leslie! The prize is yet within your reach!"

"What mean you, Duchess?" inquired his Grace.

"I mean, Duke, that Fanny Fitz-York

is yet a single woman. But listen and surmise."

"Grosvenor-hall, Jan. 12, 1813.

"My dear Duchess,

"What strange, unaccountable, capricious mortals are peers of the realm! Would not you have supposed, from the precipitance with which I was hurried from Newland, that my presence was essentially necessary to my Lord? And so it was in one respect. The gout was attended, *en suite*, by spleen and ill-nature, and nobody was thought so proper to bear with their impertinence as his poor wife. Except on these momentous occasions, I am forbidden his presence; and my real situation in this old mansion is similar to that of a Frenchman upon Dartmoor, namely, a prisoner on my parole.

"I have heard nothing of Fanny or her charming mother, since I left your cheerful society; but I conclude the former has long since returned to the fertile plains of Devon. Captain Corbett I see has not

only left Newland, but taken unto himself a wife. The papers announce the bride as a Miss Cavendish——." Leslie, who had been all ear during the last sentence, now exclaimed, with more than ordinary emotion, "are you sure the name is Cavendish?"

"I think so. At any rate, I am sure it is not Fitz-York."

"Thank you, my dear aunt; you have infused new life into me, and I beg the lovely Fanny pardon a thousand times for supposing it *possible* she *could* marry such a man as Corbett. To-morrow's sun shall find me on the road to Devonshire."

"Be it so," said his Grace. Then addressing himself to the Duchess, continued, "is that the whole of Lady Milford's letter."

"I was so eager to communicate good news," replied she, "that I have yet read no further, but will continue it aloud, for your amusement. "If Mrs. Bloomfield still remains at Newland, tell her a visit to Grosvenor-hall will be an act of charity,

where I would join her in railing at the follies of mankind, than which she will never find a better subject than the lord of this noble mansion; who, between politics and the gout, is most insufferably tiresome. Your Grace is happily exempt from the tyranny of either. Would fate had woven a different web for me! Though the world had thereby been deprived of an example of fortitude and philosophy every female is not endowed with.

"I beg to be affectionately remembered to his Grace and the girls; and, though last, not least, to Leslie, whom I once hoped—but no matter. Wayward destiny frequently crosses our dearest wishes, and leaves weak mortals to regret their failure.

"I remain,

with the most perfect regard,

your Grace's friend and servant,

MILFORD."

"P.S. My servant has accidentally brought from a neighbouring town an old newspaper. I copy the following sentence, to shew that I have lost my own time, and tired your patience by prosing about a per-

son whose very existence was unknown to us, until a provincial print thus flatteringly announces it. 'Last Thursday was married, Captain Corbett, to Miss Cavendish. It is but justice to say, that a handsomer couple never entered the temple of Hymen, although the loss of a leg, in the service of his country, rendered the gallant bridegroom less alert than nature intended him to be.'"

"So then the husband of Miss Cavendish is not our Corbett, after all," observed the Duke, looking affectionately at his nephew.

Leslie sighed,—he almost groaned,—so heart-rending was the disappointment.

"I wish he was any body's Corbett, rather than Fanny Fitz-York's," rejoined the Duchess.

"If he be the husband of her choice,—as who can doubt it,—is not that wish, my dear mother," inquired Albina, "selfish and uncharitable?"

"When we are disappointed in our dearest expectations," replied her Grace, "the

mind is apt to complain, without taking into consideration the injurious tendency of words, spoken in the bitterness of grief or resentment. Towards Fanny Fitz-York I have no wish but what springs from affection, and an earnest desire for her happiness; and, if that wish,—that desire,—has made me appear selfish or uncharitable, I have only to say there was less of design than accident in it."

The conversation, in which Leslie *could* bear no part, was interrupted by the unexpected arrival of Sir Herbert Huntley, who called *en passant* on his road to town. Congratulations on his marriage, and the most friendly inquiries after his lady, led to the mention of Corbett's wedding. I say Corbett, for each individual felt a reluctance to associate the name of Fanny, well knowing the effect such an association would have on Leslie.

"Yes," replied the Baronet; "Captain Corbett's anti-matrimonial prejudices are at length vanquished, and I hope he is fully bent on making amends to that so-

ciety his former conduct too much outraged."

"The young lady has rather boldly ventured to adopt the old maxim," observed his Grace. "I hope, for her sake, the rake may *indeed* reform."

"Did much parade attend the wedding?" inquired Sidney.

"On the contrary. The ceremony was privately performed, at Tremorne, before a very few witnesses."

"With Lady Ann's full approbation, no doubt," observed the Duchess.

"Certainly. Whatever might have been her Ladyship's previous wish,—though I have no authority but common report, for supposing she ever thought much on the subject,—imperious necessity demanded a salvo for the lady's reputation, and to that Lady Ann Fitz-York implicitly bowed."

The astonishment of the Duke's family, at this declaration, it would be difficult to describe. Surprise, sorrow, incredulity, and indignation, by turns, strove for mastery; but the general attention was soon

fixed exclusively upon Leslie, who, with clenched hands, and a wild stare of distraction, rushed out of the room.

The amazement betrayed by the family party, at intelligence so unexpected and heart-wounding, now all centred in the worthy Baronet, whose utmost invention was unable to penetrate the cause of Talbot's behaviour. That *he* should have any interest in the fate of Julia Cavendish appeared utterly improbable; and yet, to what other motive could the agitation of himself, and the visible surprise of the family, be attributed? Corbett's general character then rushed upon his mind. He had doubtless been the declared admirer, perhaps the affianced husband, of Lady Albina, whose silence on a subject the other females seemed more than commonly curious to investigate, fixed her at once the deserted object of Corbett's perfidy. Sir Herbert, however, anxious to learn the particulars, was prevented by the arrival of company; and, as a mere call of inquiry was all his present time allowed, he left the

Abbey, sorrowing that he should have been the cause, however innocently, of uneasiness to a family he highly respected; and more than ever hating Corbett, for planting a dagger in the bosom of another lovely victim to false professions and indiscriminate gallantry.

The moment his Grace had handed the morning *time-killers* to their carriage, he flew to find, and, if possible, to comfort his nephew, but every inquiry in the house and garden proved unsuccessful. At length, he learnt, with much vexation, that Leslie left the Abbey on horseback, unattended, and that his return was uncertain. How to proceed, under such circumstances, his Grace knew not. Ignorant of his route, and the motives which prompted it, he hastened to consult the Duchess upon the expediency or otherwise of sending a trusty messenger in pursuit.

The former, her Grace totally disapproved. "Leslie," she added, "has been too long master of his own actions, to be watched and followed at this period. His

prudence and rectitude, we are well convinced, may be relied on; and who knows, after all, whether he is not merely riding off the chagrin occasioned by Sir Herbert's intelligence. By the same token, Duke, what think you of it?"

"I think the tale a base forgery, but not originating in the Baronet. Corbett himself, though why it was necessary to stigmatize the character of his wife, I cannot say, is the vile fabricator of as infamous a falsehood as ever defiled the mouth of man. Fanny Fitz-York is virtue personified, and every way too good, too nice, too noble of sentiment, for the wretch she has unwarily chosen for her protector."

"So I think; and therefore there must be some hidden cause, some motive that meets not our comprehension, for the unnatural union. If she, whom we looked upon as the paragon of chastity, fell, some vile arts must have been practised, of which we cannot even guess the extent."

"But, even on that supposition, would Fanny, the high-minded delicate Fanny,

stoop to wed the basest of his sex? I have studied her character, I know her inmost soul, and that knowledge tells me that Fanny Fitz-York would never patch a broken reputation by marriage. The wisest of us are, at times, incomprehensible beings; on this principle, therefore, we must account for, but can neither wonder at nor blame her choice, decided, in some measure, perhaps, by Lady Ann's declared wishes."

Whilst the Duke and Duchess were bewildered with conjecture, Leslie was flying on the wings of vengeance towards London, determined to call Corbett to a strict account for violating the purity of an angel; without considering that he had no right whatever to interfere in the concerns of one, who, in bestowing her person, had buried every injury, and constituted her husband sole guardian of her honour.

These reflections, I say, never occurred to Leslie: all his thoughts were fixed on the young, the beautiful, the interesting Fanny, as she last appeared to him; but

now degraded, lost, betrayed by a cowardly assassin.

He had arrived within a few paces of the Duke's residence in Piccadilly, when, buried in profound meditation, he drew up his horse just in time to avoid trampling upon a lady, whom his spirited animal had laid prostrate. Quick as thought he dismounted, and, raising the fallen female, beheld, to his astonishment, Philippa. Miss Heathcote, greatly alarmed at the rude attack, pretended also to be much hurt, in order to excite a greater degree of sensibility; and never had she heard him say "my dear Philippa" with half the softness, as at the moment he raised her in his arms, and bore her towards the Duke's mansion.

The scene had drawn together a number of spectators, but none who witnessed it so painfully as our heroine, who accidentally passed in Mr. Strictland's carriage, at the moment Leslie's words and actions betrayed such tenderness. Her first impulse was to

stop the chariot, and offer her services, but this was the thought of a moment; for under whose guidance could Philippa be so safe,—under whose auspices so happy, —or what protection could be so proper, as that of her affianced husband? Fanny sighed, as she internally pronounced the last words; it was a breathing of regret, strongly tinctured with a more baleful sensation. Envy, that corroder of peace,—that enemy to repose,—had fixed its hated residence in her bosom, and all her native philanthropy was unable to dislodge it. Her fore-knowledge of the intended alliance had not prepared her mind for the anxiety, the tenderness, the feeling of Leslie's words and manner; because, during her residence at Newland, nothing of that nature had occurred,—on the contrary, he appeared to slight all Philippa's advances,—she concluded the match to be a mere matter of policy, and that the character of lover would never be added to that of husband. But, in this instance, he had betrayed an

unequivocal proof of tenderness, that chilled her whole frame, and produced a faintness that nearly overpowered her.

'Tis a difficult thing to reconcile the feelings of the human mind. Fanny had thought of young Talbot's marriage with Philippa as a thing of course, and, reflecting upon it as inevitable, had, in some measure, brought her sensibility under subjection. But to hear him address her in accents of tenderness raised a tumult in her soul, unfelt until the present moment. She had yeilded to the necessity which bestowed his *person* on another, but his *preference*, shewn to herself in a thousand instances, she was not prepared, at the present moment, to relinquish; and difficult would be the task, she felt assured, ever to forego it.

Whilst these thoughts passed in Fanny's mind, others, of a more pleasing nature, occupied Philippa. This was her first meeting with Leslie, since he had been informed of Miss Fitz-York's marriage; and there was a tenderness in his address, a

soothing softness in his manner, unlike any thing she had before experienced. This she was unwilling to attribute to the accident, but believed,—because she hoped, —that he desired to conquer his now unavailing prepossession, and would ultimately seek, in her affections, a balm for his recent disappointment. Full of this hope, and determined to avail herself of the compassion so visible in his manner, she considered on the most proper means of prolonging their interview. To remain in the house, with no other companion, she knew would appear indecorous in the eyes of so strict an observer, unless she feigned indisposition, and that would as clearly prevent their intercourse as any other mode of separation. But could he be prevailed upon to attend her to one of the theatres, she could command his attention, for some hours, at least, and what might not a few hours accomplish in his present frame of mind? Full of this plan, she pretended to recollect a promise to support the first appearance of a new

actress, at Covent-garden Theatre; "and though," she continued, "I feel myself more disposed for a comfortable domestic party, at Newland-abbey, yet, as that is beyond my reach, if you, dear Leslie, will be my companion, the evening cannot be devoid of pleasure.

Leslie's looks could not conceal the misery which preyed upon his mind. It had, for a moment, been banished, by the accident which brought him in contact with Philippa; but, as no evil had arisen, or was likely to arise, from their untoward meeting, Fanny's injuries recurred to his memory with renewed force, and rendered every thing, like amusement, loathsome and disgusting.

Philippa read in his dejected looks a negative to her request; but, determined to persevere, she put on one of her most seducing smiles, and, laying her hand gently upon his arm, continued, "you owe me a recompense you know, Leslie, for giving me so ungallant a fall; and, were that not the case, I hope friendship,—may I not say

affection,—would lead you to grant me so unimportant a favour. I have no engagement for the evening, having refused several, for the express purpose of attending the theatre,—no society at my lodgings,—and the accident has flurried my spirits too much to render solitude desirable. Under these circumstances, you cannot refuse to be my protector, for this evening, at least. I forgot to secure a box, but, by going early, we shall meet with a front seat in the second circle, and that will better suit my dishabille and your travelling costume than a more conspicuous station. I'll ring for coffee, and order a coach to attend us at half-past six."

Philippa pursued her discourse with such rapidity, that Leslie had no opportunity, however well-inclined, to raise objections. The bell was answered in a moment, the proposed orders given, with a promptness he was unable to withstand; and, considering the day too far advanced to afford hopes of meeting with the object of his vengeance, he yielded to necessity, and

handed Philippa to the front seat of an upper side box. The lower part of the house was at that time nearly empty; but Philippa's attention was soon arrested by a party entering a box nearly opposite. They had scarcely taken their seats, when she whispered to her companion, "the new married couple." Leslie, without feeling interested in the intelligence, attended politely to the information, and followed with his eyes the direction of hers; but I leave my reader to conceive the full force of his feelings, when, smiling in youth and loveliness, and seated between Corbett and Lady Ann, Fanny met his vision!

She appeared to be listening attentively to some information conveyed by Mr. Strictland, from whom she turned to address the Captain, who seemed to be more than usually animated. "Happy Corbett!" sighed forth Leslie, in an audible voice. "His wife, too, *seems* happy! And am I doomed to be the instrument to disturb her serenity? Never! If Fanny complain not,—if she be satisfied,—if wedlock pos-

sess powers to blot out injuries of the most deadly kind,—by what right, human or divine, do I presume to interfere?" He then fell into a fit of musing for some time undisturbed, for Philippa was too much the victim of astonishment to interrupt either his soliloquy or subsequent cogitation. Her fears for his reason were at first too powerful to admit of any other idea; these, at length, however, gave way to rage and vexation, when she perceived him on the point of leaving the box without apology, or seeming to recollect that such a person as herself was in existence.

In no very conciliating tone she reminded him of his error, adding, "you surely do not mean to leave me here alone!" Leslie apologized for his sudden fit of abstraction, and, again seated himself, his attention still rivetted, as by fascination, on the opposite box.

At this moment, Lady Ann, accidentally casting up her eyes, said something to her daughter, who instantly looked in the same direction, and returned her Ladyship's

whisper; her face and neck glowing with a contrariety of sensations. Corbett's attention was, by this time, fixed on the same box with an appearance of triumphant exultation. Leslie had often been an object of envy at Newland; now it was in his power to retaliate,—now he should be envied in turn, and the *lex talionis*, was his favourite motto. Lady Ann, not conceiving any resentment due to Mr. Talbot, since the Duke's letter was doubtless sent without his knowledge, gave him frequent opportunities of paying distant respect; but her every glance was unnoticed. His eye never wandered a moment from Fanny and her supposed husband, whose happiness assumed an appearance almost tumultuous; whilst the pensive paleness of Fanny's countenance betrayed, to the apprehensive Leslie, rather a resignation to her fate than an approval of it. "But, since her destiny is irrevocably fixed," thought he, "it shall be my care, with unremitting zeal, to avoid an enemy so fatal to my re-

pose; and, for her sake, will I also shun her husband, lest resentment tempt me to act in a manner hostile to her peace."

Philippa's plans for engaging the undivided attention of her companion had totally failed. She had, by falsehood and stratagem, brought him into the presence of one, whose power, although she really supposed her to have contracted other engagements, she dreaded; and whose fascination she inwardly allowed. Instead of being herself an object of solicitude, he appeared to consider her as an incumbrance; and every attempt to attract his notice was answered by a cold monosyllable, or still more contemptuous silence. At the critical moment; when her patience was nearly exhausted, and her hardly-suppressed ill-humour ready to burst forth, and defeat all her sanguine expectations of one day being a duchess, an acquaintance of both strolled into the box, and relieved her, in some measure, from the appearance of belonging to nobody; for several beings

had before entered, and, with impudent effrontery, seemed to signify, that they might stare at her with impunity.

To the late comer's address, Leslie made no other reply than desiring him to take charge of Miss Heathcote, since business of importance called him to another spot. The truth is, the play was that moment ended, and Lady Ann's party appeared to be on the move. Without deciding on the proper or improper, and maugre all his former resolutions, a propelling desire, he was unable in his present frame of mind to resist, urged him to reconnoitre the motions of Corbett and his wife, where he could hear and see, without being himself discovered: what end was to be answered by this manœuvre he did not give himself time to reflect, otherwise, than that he should once more hear those silver tones which had hitherto vibrated on the chords of his heart, — tones, to which he must henceforth be a stranger.

He arrived at one door of the saloon, as Mr. Strictland, with a lady hanging on

each arm, entered the other. But where was Corbett? "Would I," thought Leslie, "in his situation, have given up the care of my treasure to another?" Fanny's eyes seemed to wander in search of some one who appeared not, and the probability was against its being the Captain, because her attention rested on the opposite entrance. Was it not possible she expected he would take the present opportunity of congratulating her on her marriage? And was it not highly proper he should? Certainly. Common politeness demanded the sacrifice, and he was on the point of rushing from his hiding-place, when Corbett entered with information that the carriage waited; then taking Fanny's hand, who appeared reluctantly to follow Lady Ann and her guardian, they all disappeared.

The moment they left the saloon, Leslie darted from his retreat, and followed at a less cautious distance. Some occasion would probably occur before they entered the carriage whereby he might hear her voice; and, by her words, her manner, or

both, form a more clear judgment of the strength of an attachment, he could, in spite of circumstances, scarcely believe to exist. To something which had fallen unheard from the lips of Corbett, Fanny replied, "whenever that event takes place, I hope he will be happy. I know few whose deserts equal Mr. Talbot's, not one who excels him." "Surely one," thought Leslie, "or why was he preferred?" The cause,—the hateful cause of Corbett's success in a moment rushed upon his mind; and the conviction came with full assurance that necessity, not choice, had given him the advantage. The thought was so fearfully agonizing,—he beheld the seducer of Fanny in so hateful a light, that her presence scarcely withheld him from intemperate violence. Imaginings of direst import absorbed his every faculty,—the carriage rolled away unheeded,—and not until Corbett brushed rather rudely past him did he recover to any degree of recollection.

Without giving himself time to wonder

that any amusement could induce the Captain to quit his bride, he sternly demanded what was meant by jostling him with so little ceremony?

"When we are in haste," replied Corbett, "ceremony is not the first idea which occurs; nor did I dream that Mr. Talbot was the melancholy swain, who chose a public thoroughfare wherein to indulge his love-sick meditations."

"To bear triumph with moderation," replied Leslie, "I did not expect from Captain Corbett; but happiness is no excuse for impertinence; and, the malicious sneer which marks your words must not be repeated."

"If it should, I shall subject myself to the high displeasure of Mr. Talbot! Well! Such a calamity may be endured without sinking under it."

"It may. The man who can bear the stings of his own conscience, when overwhelmed with guilt, may bear up against every other ill."

"Your words demand an explanation. What mean they?"

"They mean that you are a seducer. That you took advantage of female innocence to rob it of its most valuable treasure."

"I do not acknowledge Mr. Talbot's right to call me to account. Besides, have I not made all the reparation in my power?"

"No reparation can atone to a delicate mind for the loss of honour. Marriage may veil the crime, but every man of feeling will view your conduct with the detestation it deserves."

"You are a very young censor, Mr. Talbot, in a cause, too, which no way concerns you."

"It is the concern of every man to censure conduct that reflects disgrace upon the name he bears. For your wife's sake I meant to have avoided this altercation; but, when I find her so early deserted,—left by her husband,—not to the care of strangers, indeed,—but under the protec-

tion of ties less sacred than those which ought to shelter her——"

"You are going to be devilish severe, Talbot, I believe; but, to shew you how much more liberal my sentiments are than yours, I would have married people follow the bent of their separate inclinations, and by no means think, because we have submitted to a political institution, we are to drag through life like two puppies coupled together."

"Such notions, Captain Corbett, are too often broached by libertines to cover their own inconstancy; yet, with all your boasted licentiousness, I should hope the most depraved amongst you would wish his wife to be scrupulously delicate in her conduct. But, whilst you are following pleasure in all its various shapes, what becomes of her? If not surrounded by respectable friends, as Mrs. Corbett happily is, how critical her situation! Young, lovely, and inexperienced——"

"Stop, stop, my good fellow! Like many a fine orator, you are making a

grand period at the expense of truth. Young and lovely, I grant; but, if Mrs. Corbett have not had plenty of experience, the devil's in it. You look surprised, and I could almost think angry; but, to cut the matter short, I am already tired of my chains, and so perfectly indifferent respecting my wife's conduct——"

"How!"

"That you, or any other of my friends, have free leave to comfort her in my absence."

Leslie uttered the word "d——n——n!" with an emphasis that made Corbett start, and accompanied it by a blow that forced him to reel several paces. At this crisis, that part of the audience who had retired to take refreshment returned, when several of the foremost witnessed Leslie's proceeding, and naturally stopped to inquire the occasion. Neither of the party chose, however, to give an explanation; young Talbot, through delicacy towards Fanny, and the Captain, because he wished not to have the infamy of his conduct publicly

known, and any explanation on his part would, he conceived, tempt his adversary to expose all that had passed.

Having recovered from the giddiness caused by Leslie's manual exertion, and seeing wonder in the countenances of all present, Corbett knew that one method only remained to preserve his character; he, therefore, with as much composure as he could assume, said, "you are not leaving town immediately?" To which Leslie replied, "I shall be found in Piccadilly the two succeeding days," and quitted the theatre.

The allotted time, however, expired, without letter or message. A third, a fourth day elapsed unnoticed, when Leslie conceived himself at liberty to depart.

Meanwhile, Corbett pondered on the means of evading the dangers of a duel. 'Tis true he had overcome Moseley in a rencontre of the same nature; but he had too often witnessed, during the preceding summer, Leslie's uncommon skill, to subject himself, willingly, to the chance of a

shot from his unerring hand. Besides, Talbot, in his hearing, had frequently reprobated the practice of duelling; and, in his calmer moments, possessed a degree of gentlemanly forbearance, inimical to the outrageous violence of posting a man, for not doing what he confessed to be wrong. On this, Corbett thought he might place implicit confidence,—at least he determined to trust it,—and seek revenge for mortification, slight, and insult, without endangering his life.

His conduct to Julia had intirely reinstated him in the good opinion of Lady Ann and her daughter. He constantly spoke of her with affection and tenderness, regretted their separation, which he attributed to the delay at the War-office, and painted the dreariness of his apartments, with no companion but his own melancholy thoughts, so feelingly, that Mr. Strictland pitied his forlorn state, and gave him a general invitation to pass as much time in Lombard-street as his other avocations would permit. This he gladly availed

himself of, and scarcely a day elapsed without the introduction of new music, or a popular publication, rendered more interesting by his general knowledge of the characters frequently portrayed.

In this domestic intercourse, nearly a fortnight rolled away, when the city party met the view of Leslie and Philippa; and had there been the least doubt, in either of their minds, of Fanny's marriage,—which there was not,—seeing Corbett so situated, would have destroyed it.

CHAP. VII.

THE UNEXPECTED VISIT, — A GREAT LADY HUMBLED, — EVE'S DROPPING ENDS IN A TRAGICAL RESOLVE.

Lady Ann,—we leave our readers to guess what were Fanny's feelings,—was more hurt than she chose to confess, at the freezing distance of Leslie's manner. That he noticed them was evident, for his eyes never for a moment removed from their box, yet no recognizing bow acknowledged former intimacy. Perhaps,—she shuddered at the reflection,—he had discovered her daughter's unhappy partiality at Newland, and took that method of discouraging it: perhaps,—which was still worse,—Miss Heathcote had likewise

observed it, and he avoided renewing the acquaintance, for fear of giving her uneasiness. And could Fanny,—could her darling daughter, be an object of pity,—perhaps contempt? There was distraction in the thought.

These unpleasant meditations, which our heroine appeared to participate, were interrupted by Mr. Strictland pronouncing the word "coxcomb!" in a tone of contempt he seldom used. But, though it somewhat changed the course of their meditations, it produced no rejoinder; and he continued, in rather a softened key, "I may be wrong. Perhaps, my dear ward, you and Mr. Talbot quarrelled, before you left Newland, and that may have caused his shyness this evening."

"Quarrelled, guardian! Never! How could such a circumstance enter your imagination?"

"Then he is angry at our running away that morning, without breakfast, which I declare I never could see the necessity for, especially as Mr. Talbot proposed to take

the parting meal with us, and to accompany us one stage of our journey."

Lady Ann fixed her eyes with looks of compassion on her daughter, who blushed deeply, but made no reply. "I wish he had joined us this evening," continued the worthy merchant, "I would have apologized for what he must think a gross violation of politeness."

"My dear friend," replied her Ladyship, "Mr. Talbot has too much good sense to be offended, where he must be certain no offence was designed. Circumstances, seemingly unaccountable, are easily explained, when we catch hold of the smallest clue; and, as the gentleman we are speaking of is on the eve of marriage, with the lady who accompanied him, his inattention to other females is a compliment to his chosen fair one, at the expense of general good breeding indeed, but on that account the more highly estimated."

Corbett omitted not his usual call in Lombard-street, and, with infinite ease and good-humour, descanted on the topics

of the day. After these were exhausted, he continued, "when I parted with this good company last evening, I returned to pay my respects to Leslie and his intended. Upon my word, she looked divinely; but happiness is a great improver of beauty, and theirs, I doubt not, will be permanent. It is an attachment of long-standing; the friends on both sides are unanimous in wishing for the union; and, as soon as the law's delay can be overcome, young Talbot leads Miss Heathcote to the altar. By-the-bye, I promised to meet him in Long-Acre, at two o'clock, to give my opinion of his hymenial equipage; from thence we proceed to his jeweller's, in Bond-street, who is new modelling the family trinkets, and completing a superb service of plate as a bridal present from his Grace to the Duchess in future."

Corbett uttered this artful impromptu with such appearance of candour, and his female auditors were so entirely prepared for each circumstance, that not a doubt was entertained of his veracity. Fanny, to

conceal her agitation, pretended to be deeply engaged with her crayons, but her thoughts were widely absent; and, had she made any progress, 'tis probable the cheeks of her guardian, to whose portrait she was giving some finishing touches, might have been tinged with green or yellow, instead of their native carmine. Her embarrassment and the consequent feelings of Lady Ann were, however, happily dissipated, by the entrance of a servant with a card for his master.

"Lady Mountcastle!" said Mr. Strictland, in amazement: "where is her Ladyship?"

"In her carriage, at the door, Sir. She inquired if you were alone, and disengaged; and, when I replied that you were still in the breakfast-room, with Lady Ann and Miss Fitz-York, her Lady looked surprised, but said she should be glad to see the whole party."

Mr. Strictland examined his friend's looks for an answer to the Countess. "Admit her by all means," said her Lady-

ship. "Though I wish not for the meeting, I shall not avoid i ; let the faulty person skrink, we are firm in conscious rectitude, and cannot be abashed by the pride and hauteur of a sister."

When Mr. Strictland left the room, accompanied by Corbett,—who, not wishing to face Lady Mountcastle, stepped into an adjoining apartment, until he could leave the house unperceived,—Fanny vainly pleaded for leave to retire. "My spirits," she continued, "are oppressed beyond measure, and the freezing unfriendly distance of the Countess may force me to betray a weakness ill-becoming your daughter."

Lady Ann saw, with pain, that Fanny with difficulty restrained her tears; but, well knowing the cause, and that, if suffered to depart, she would give free vent to those feelings, the coming interview was calculated to turn into a different channel, positively forbade all idea of retreat, and was proceeding to advise a certain mode of conduct, when Mr. Strictland and her

Ladyship entered. In Lady Mountcastle's countenance, the most inexperienced judge of physiognomy might read pride and arrogance combating the wish to appear kind and condescending. This gave an awkwardness to her manner, the sister and niece were totally exempt from; and an observer of human nature, in canvassing the behaviour of the three, would have supposed the two latter had never moved in a less exalted sphere than their birth intended, whilst the former appeared, for the first time, in the presence of her superiors, and felt all that embarrassment and awe annexed to the situation.

Mr. Strictland, who, I hope my reader has ere this discovered, possessed much solid sense, and some knowledge of mankind, although not conversant with courtly etiquette, endeavoured to do away the formality of the interview, by saying, as he handed the Countess towards her sister, "to Lady Ann Fitz-York, and my inestimable charge, I beg leave to introduce Lady Mountcastle, who has done me

the honour of a friendly visit." At the word "*friendly*," her Ladyship,—spite of her endeavours to appear affable,—bridled, and scanned the speaker from head to foot. "If I have presumed too much," he continued, offended at her manner, "in calling this interview *friendly*, to what motive shall I impute it? No hostility on my part *provoked* it, no desire of mine *foreran* it, nor have I a wish, independent of friendship, to seek connections beyond the sphere in which providence has placed me."

The good merchant dropped her Ladyship's hand, the moment he saw the effect of his well-intended prelude, and resumed his speech with an undaunted firmness, that made even Lady Mountcastle inwardly confess the superiority of his character. When he ceased speaking, with affected humility she declared her sorrow, for having unintentionally drawn forth so severe a philippic. "My design, in visiting the city," she continued, "was both friendly and conciliating; although the

conscious inequality of our situations, which, in my general society, I have seldom cause to remark, might create a momentary surprise at the freedom of your address. By what cause I am not able at present to determine, Lady Ann Fitz-York and myself have been too much estranged; and the occasion of my present visit was an amicable adjustment of differences, through your means, not suspecting that my sister and Frances were in town. That I have been fortunate enough to meet them will save a great deal of round-about negociation, and, I trust, end in the happiness of a son deservedly dear to Lord Mountcastle and myself, and of whom his whole family have cause to be proud."

Her Ladyship stopped, in expectation of a reply. But, as the speech was decidedly not addressed to Lady Ann, she conceived herself fully at liberty to remain silent; and Mr. Strictland felt the impropriety of interfering in family disputes. A pause, therefore, ensued, but it was of short duration; for the Countess, having

so far conquered her pride as to seek the mediation of a citizen, resolved, since the objects of her solicitude were present, to try the full force of that eloquence, which, in her own house, never failed to conquer, if not to convince. Her first attack, from being indirect, had also been ineffectual; she, therefore, determined to come to the point immediately, and without ceremony. "Lady Ann," addressing her sister, in tones truly conciliating and a manner as amiable as she could assume, "from the moment of Miss Fitz-York's birth, it was the wish nearest my heart to still further unite our families, by her union with Moseley. I will not hypocritically say that her prospects in life held forth no temptation. Rank and title must be supported; and Lord Mountcastle's fortune is too limited to overlook the want of it in the bride of his son. Having, as I before said, centred the whole of my wishes in your daughter, judge of my disappointment, in finding her, on my return to Britain, a portionless heiress; at least, so far

portionless, as to render her marriage with Lord Moseley imprudent, — improper, — impossible. Had I not been aware of Fanny's attractions, and fearful of their effect upon my son, I should not have shunned your acquaintance." Lady Ann here cast a look of dignified contempt at the Countess, whilst Fanny's face was covered with blushes of resentment, at supposing it possible that any one, however raised in the world's estimation, *could* shun the acquaintance of Lady Ann Fitz-York.

The Countess was unconscious of the full tenor of her words, until interrupted by her sister's manner. But, quickly recovering her self-possession, she continued, "hear me out, Ann. I was going to say, that had we not been blessed with a son, who must hand down our house's dignity and honours undiminished to posterity——"

"*Must*, Lady Mountcastle?"

"Yes, *must*. He must,—he *will*. Moseley cannot degenerate. He will support the illustrious stock from whence he springs,

and add additional grandeur to his father's name and title."

Lady Ann smiled at her sister's boast of a family raised from nothing, and a title little dreamt of by her Lord's immediate ancestor. But the Countess, undaunted, went on: "This cannot be done without adding to the family riches. My Lord's protracted embassy in Russia was attended with expenses scarcely imagined by those who have not experienced the necessity of supporting a nation's dignity, in a foreign clime; and, I am proud to say, no plenipotentiary from this country ever gave more expensive proofs of loyalty, or of the inexhaustible wealth of Great-Britain than my Lord Mountcastle. This leads us to the point from whence I sat out,—namely,—the impossibility of Moseley marrying a portionless wife, however unexceptionable in other respects. Whilst Frances was considered in that light, I naturally set my face against her."

"Rudely!—Insolently!—Unfeelingly!" interrupted Lady Ann. "Had you acted

with the same candour you are now using, I would have seconded your plans, because they would have been justifiable; but the unfeeling strain of your letters, and those of Lord Milford, authorized by you, together with the marked contempt of both towards an unoffending sister and niece, reflect disgrace on yourselves, but attach none to us."

"I confess it all, Ann. You cannot feel more mortified at my past conduct than I do; but you should make allowances for the mother of such a son as Moseley."

"I make no allowances, Lady Mountcastle, for unauthorized pride and selfish cruelty. Lord Moseley is a young man any parent might be proud of, but the mother of Fanny Fitz-York has equal cause for pride, and cannot—*will* not tamely suffer her to be treated with indignity."

"If you would patiently hear me to the end, you would find that I wish to make every amends in my power for the neglect

of my former conduct,—neglect caused wholly, as I hinted before, by——"

"*Our poverty,*" interrupted Lady Ann. "But, since the daughter of Mr. Fitz-York, with a moderate competence, was beneath your notice, the *heiress* of Mr. O'Brian *must* remain a stranger."

Fanny looked at her mother, as if doubting her words; but, without noticing the appeal, her Ladyship proceeded. "The wealth of Mr. Fitz-York's uncle was not necessary to our happiness; nor shall a knowledge of it procure Fanny those attentions her own merit could not command, whilst possessing comparative poverty. It was the wish of her late father that she should be respected, independent of those extrinsic advantages opulence never fails to command, even when accompanied with impotence of mind and meanness of conduct; in obedience to that wish, I have hitherto kept the disposition of Mr. O'Brian's fortune a secret, lest it tempt others, as it has done *you*, Lady Mountcastle, to *worship* the *golden*

calf, and to forget her former insignificance in her present splendour."

Lady Mountcastle frowned and bit her lips; but, as she had not yet lost all hopes of the alliance, she so far conquered her resentment, as to force her mouth into something like a smile. "I could almost think," she replied, "that you are a changeling; such bitter words could never proceed from my once gentle Ann. But, since I confess my former errors, you have more cause to believe my present sincerity, when I assure you, that I would rather Moseley married Fanny than any other female with *equal* pretensions. Her person, her character, her accomplishments, are unquestionable; and, since Mr. O'Brian has added the only thing wanting, I will not give myself leave to doubt her preference of Moseley, let us, I say, end all animosity, by a family compact equally honourable to both parties."

"Lady Mountcastle, the time when Fanny could have loved her cousin, and joyfully accompanied him to the altar, is

passed. Other friends, other attachments, have succeeded, and you have only to blame yourself, which you will one day most keenly, for being less kind to *her*, less indulgent to your *son*, than two such beings deserved."

"Am I to understand that Fanny's heart is engaged, and not to Moseley? Surely that wretch Corbett——"

"You are to understand whatever my words *convey*, but nothing *more*. Other friends and other attachments have superseded the regard she once felt for Lord Moseley; but it does not follow that her affections are exclusively engaged to any individual, least of all to Captain Corbett. Fanny is not one of those sentimental misses, who uphold love in opposition to prudence. The moment she perceived them at variance, her mind was capable of an effort, painful indeed, but successful, and strengthened by self-approbation, and the consciousness of acting right."

Fanny's bosom heaved with a deep-drawn sigh, and looking up, she perceived

her mother's eyes affectionately fixed upon her. Lady Mountcastle, too, viewed her with a glance so scrutinizing, that her before pale cheeks were suffused with the deepest carnation, and filled the Countess with hopes, that her feelings falsified her mother's words, and that Moseley's power remained unshaken. Full of this error, she addressed our heroine. "Will Miss Fitz-York allow my son to plead his own cause? Maria, too, languishes to see you, and my Lord declares, the entrance of Lady Ann and her daughter under his battlements, will be the happiest period of his life. What day is this? Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, — may we expect the present party to a family dinner on Thursday?"

"Fanny," replied Lady Ann, "looks as if she wished to profit by your tardy invitation, and I have never allowed myself to thwart her wishes. Mr. Strictland will act as he thinks proper; but I have been too long estranged from family connexions to anticipate the smallest pleasure from a re-

newal. Whenever Lord Moseley and Lady Maria, to whom I have transferred those affections, a brother and sister's conduct have destroyed, favour me with a visit, I shall be happy to see them; but, it must be in my own house, or in the houses of those who *love us*, independent of *worldly advantages*."

Lady Mountcastle trusting to time for a change in her sister's sentiments, took leave, after reminding Fanny of her engagement. "When proud spirits are obliged to submit, how abject they become!" observed Lady Ann, when the Countess disappeared. "If people, in general, would only consider the *policy* of acting right, much inward mortification and self-abasement would be avoided, of which my poor sister has this morning exhibited a woeful example. I could not, in spite of her faults, sometimes help pitying her; though that is a sentiment she little dreamt of exciting in the breast of the once despised Ann."

When Corbett expressed an inclination

to avoid Lady Mountcastle, he was shewn, as we before observed, into an adjoining apartment. This happened to be a china closet, divided only by a thin partition from the breakfast-room, from which there was a borrowed light, and over that, a curtain suspended on the inside. The Captain well knew the terms on which the two families stood; and, naturally feeling curious to develope the lady's motives for seeking this neglected branch of nobility, he held the door a-jar, hoping to gather from her words, as she ascended the stairs, some hint. But, to his great surprise, the first voice he heard evidently proceeded from the room he had left, and, turning round, the advantage of his situation became obvious. No point of delicacy,—no sense of impropriety stood in the noble Captain's way; even his fears of being detected as a listener, by the servants, yielded to his insatiable curiosity; and, by lifting up a small corner of the curtain, he could see as well as hear, all that passed. "Fanny an heiress! Fanny possessing im-

mense wealth! was an object of such added importance, that he more than ever cursed the hour of his penitentials, and execrated the unoffending creature who alone stood, he thought, betwixt him and his ambition."

The wholesome adage, that "listeners seldom hear good of themselves," was here verified. The Countess called him a *wretch!* and her mild sister placed him amongst the *least* of Fanny's temptations to *preference.* Moseley, who had been rejected solely on his mother's account, had now in her a powerful pleader; and, had he taken such guilty pains to separate Fanny and Leslie, to see her the wife of another? At a moment, too, when she had acquired, in his eyes, such added estimation? The idea was distraction, and engendered a thought of dreadful import: Whilst Julia lived, Fanny could never be his,—but, once removed, means might be taken to compel a marriage, if, as he had little doubt, persuasion should fail.

Full of schemes, suggested by ambition,

and planned by cruelty, he rushed out of the house, and after calling at a druggist's, in the city, seated himself in a coach, that moment leaving Lad-lane for Exeter.

Fanny went alone to Berkeley-square, and was received by the Earl with unaffected pleasure. The estrangement of the two families was never sanctioned by him; and now he had liberty from the ruling power to act in conformity to his own feelings, he betrayed his good-humoured satisfaction by the kiss of welcome, and an assurance, as he led her up stairs, that his regard for her should only be inferior to the love of his own children. Fanny, with feelings of gratified delight, thanked him for this affectionate avowal. Her heart, ever open to kindness, had heaved many a sigh at the loss of relative attachment, and there was something in the good Peer's manner so conciliating,—so unostentatious,—so approximate to her own ideas of goodness and virtue,—in short, his manner was so natural,—so unlike the assumed suavity and artificial demeanour of his

Lady,—that, in the joy of the moment, she gracefully raised his hand to her lips, and called him her kind uncle. In this frame of mind they entered the drawing-room; his Lordship's countenance beaming with benevolence, Fanny's with pleasure.

The Countess received her with much apparent kindness, regretted the absence of her sister, and made friendly inquiries after Mr. Strictland; whilst Maria's affectionate heart could scarcely contain its rapture. "How kind, how condescending you are," whispered she, as she led her to a distant part of the room. "Moseley will be delighted, and I expect a young friend of yours, whose acquaintance I have lately made. Lady Mountcastle suffered me to invite her, to do away, as she said, the formality of a family party. Surely an *affectionate* family can never be formal; and, if she had said, to prevent unpleasant retrospection, perhaps recrimination, I fear it would have been more correct."

"Retrospections of an unpleasant na-

ture, my dear Maria, I never encourage, and recrimination would be highly improper towards my mother's sister. Believe me, I anticipate too much advantage from the countenance of so near a relative, to feel towards her any other sentiment than respect, if that will be allowed. The person you expect is a female of course. Her name?"

"Bloomfield. Not the Widow. Barbara Bloomfield. I had been acquainted with her some time, ere Lady Mountcastle would permit me to call upon her, because her father once followed some kind of business. But she is now quite a fashionable girl, and received in the best society; therefore, it plainly shews that my Lady mother is more fastidious than other people of equal rank."

The person in question now entered with Lord Moseley, and was received by the Earl as the favourite friend of his daughter. Her Ladyship, too, vouchsafed to pronounce a welcome, after which Barbara joined the cousins at the farther end

of the room, whither Moseley had flown the moment he perceived our heroine. The meeting was attended with a slight degree of embarrassment on his part; but, the animation of his companions soon became contagious, and, when dinner was announced, it would have been difficult to say which of the four seemed most happy. Lively and pleasant conversation garnished the meal; even the Countess smiled approbation of each lively sally, and Lord Mountcastle declared he had never been so happy.

About eight o'clock Lord Milford called, merely, as he informed his sister, to excuse his non-attendance at dinner. "You did not wait, I hope?" he added. "My time is so fully occupied between the cabinet and Carlton-house, that I ought never to promise myself to an ordinary dinner."*

"Ordinary!" repeated the Countess, with a disdainful toss of the head, whilst her Lord and his son smiled at the proud Peer's self-importance.

"You may change the word for one

you like better, Lady Mountcastle, so it retain the meaning I wish to express; namely, to oppose *ordinary* with *extraordinary*."

"And pray where are your Lordship's *extraordinary* dinners held?" inquired the Countess.

"In Downing-street, Fife-house, Milford-house, and various other places, where the cabinet ministers meet. But of this, you, as a female, can know nothing, and Moseley seems determined to know as little. Had he been governed by my advice, he would ere this have been a leading man in the House of Commons, nay, the affairs of this powerful kingdom might have been in his hands."

"The kingdom ought to be very thankful then, that I followed my own guidance in preference to your Lordship's," said Moseley. "If our situation be deplorable under the present wise administration, what would it have been under the controul of youth and inexperience?"

"Every thing that is great and glorious

under my auspices. Your powers of oratory and my legislative wisdom, I am bold to say, would have raised England to a pitch of glory she never knew before."

"Your wisdom, my Lord, cannot be doubted in the present company. But, suppose I possessed the eloquence of Fox, Pitt, Burke, and Sheridan combined, I should at last be only a mere talker, and how would that add to the glory of my country?"

"*I* would lay the plans for her aggrandizement, and *you* could force the Commons, by your arguments, to adopt them."

"And, by that means your Lordship and I could govern the country at our pleasure?"

"Certainly."

"I thank you, my Lord, but I cannot be a stalking horse to you or any other man. I must be perfectly convinced that the measures you recommend are founded in wisdom, and supported by justice, ere I could or would speak in defence of them. Your Lordship would very kindly make a

tool of me; but you would find me a troublesome one to manage, since I could in no one instance be depended upon."

"I would not hear your enemy say so, cousin," said Fanny, smiling.

"You are not capricious or unsteady, Moseley," observed Lord Mountcastle.

"I hope neither, my Lord. It is my *steadiness* the Earl would have to dread,—my steadiness of principle. When a question was brought forward, which I could conscientiously approve, I would support it with the best powers of my mind, whether the mover sat on the right or the left. When, on the contrary, something inimical to my ideas of right was proposed, I should battle it with all the argument in my power, even though it were a *pet* question, nourished and cherished by your Lordship and your party."

"You were not born for a minister of state, Moseley," said his father.

"I fancy not, my Lord. A minister's power, I understand, ceases, when he can no longer command a majority. And, as

I would never move a question my conscience did not approve, or support it when proposed by my colleagues, I should necessarily be often, perhaps most frequently, joined with the weaker party; when I must, of course, resign, or submit to the mortification of being turned out."

"All this is very fine," said Lord Milford, with a sneer, "and no doubt you think very just. But wait till you have had as much experience as I have, and you will see the absurdity of it. At your time of life, men imbibe opinions and sentiments, which they afterwards find to be fallacious and chimerical;—opinions which they dignify with the title of independence, and sentiments falsely called patriotic. Pitt and Burke, names you have quoted, thought as you do in the fervour of youth; but, where will you find two more staunch advocates for ministerial influence, when years and experience had mellowed their judgment?"

Lord Mountcastle saw, by the rising colour in Moseley's face, and a contemp-

tuous smile that gathered round his mouth, that he was going to enter more warmly into the debate than in his own house, and in the company of females, might be proper, he, therefore, said, good-humouredly, "I think, brother Peer, some subject might be started more amusing to these fair ladies than politics. This is the first time we have been favoured with the company of Miss Fitz-York, and she will scarcely be prevailed upon to repeat her visit, unless we convince her that we *can* discuss other topics."

Fanny had been totally unnoticed by Lord Milford, except by a general bow to the ladies on his entrance. But, hearing her name mentioned, he coldly inquired after Lady Ann, and was glad to find matters in train for a reconciliation. "Your mother's pride," he added, "which has always been excessive, will now yield to the condescending intreaties of Lord and Lady Mountcastle."

"Condescending, brother!" said Her Ladyship, alarmed at his method of intro-

ducing the subject, and giving him a look full of meaning.

"Friendly,—would have been a better word, certainly," replied his Lordship, taking the hint. "And, as their son's happiness seems to depend upon an union with you———." Fanny had taken Barbara's hand, at the beginning of this pompous harangue, under pretence of examining her bracelet, but, in fact, to convince his Lordship of her perfect indifference. Suddenly she felt it tremble violently, and, looking in her countenance, she perceived it pale and disordered. "Suffer me to lead you out," she said, in a low voice.

"Oh, no," replied the agitated girl. "On no account,—I shall be better soon,—the oppressive heat of the room———." Fanny smiled, for only a few minutes before they had remarked how extremely cold it was.

His Lordship still proceeded, but Fanny's thoughts were engaged on a different subject. From Barbara she turned her eyes upon Moseley, and read enough to

convince her, that the lady was in love, and the gentleman by no means indifferent to the mischief he had caused. The discovery was both pleasing and painful. She was glad to find Moseley cured of his passion for her; but, how would Lady Mountcastle's pride submit to accept, as a daughter, the female whom she scarcely condescended to receive as Maria's visitor. Poor Moseley! Was his affectionate heart never to find a resting place? Miss Bloomfield's immense fortune then recurred to her memory, and knowing her aunt's predilection for wealth and grandeur, she hoped want of birth would be no lasting obstacle.

The Earl of Milford, meanwhile talked, and swelled, and wondered. Some parts of his discourse, though he spoke rather at than to Fanny, he thought required an answer; but, as none reached him from the quarter he expected, he set her down, in his own mind, as an insolent proud minx, the exact prototype of her haughty self-willed mother, and with these sentiments coldly left the room. Lady Ann's coach-

man, at the same moment, drew up, with orders to bring Miss Bloomfield to Lombard-street, where her mother waited for her; and, Moseley, under pretence of seeing his cousin safe, jumped in after them.

CHAP. VIII.

AN END TO BE PRODUCED BY OTHER MEANS,—A GHOST AT A VILLAGE INN,—A SOP IN THE PAN FOR DREAMERS,—AND WISE CONJECTURES UPON A LATE EVENT.

Resolutions formed in a hurry and without reflection are seldom lasting; but Corbett, unhappily, was an exception to this commonly-received opinion. His determination gained strength as he advanced on the journey; for, not to be revenged on Leslie,—not to lead a life of affluence when the means were in his power,—better not live at all.

As the coach stopped to change horses, at Taunton, a hawker presented some papers through the window.

What are they?" inquired a Somersetshire farmer.

"The last dying speech and confession of James Meadowcroft, who was executed, last Saturday, for the murder of his wife," answered the pedlar. Corbett gave a start, and the young man purchased the speech.

"How did he murder the unhappy woman?" inquired a cheerful looking Quaker.

"By poison," replied the farmer, as he was perusing the paper. Corbett shuddered.

"What wretched depravity there is in the world!" exclaimed the Quaker.

"He makes ample confession of his guilt," continued the farmer; "and says, a wish to marry another woman instigated him to the crime."

Corbett trembled and turned pale.

"Murder is a heinous sin," observed the Quaker, "and death by poison the most cruel; since it is lingering, and attended with torture indescribable."

Corbett took something from his pocket,

and, with a tremulous hand, threw it into the road.

"Now we are talking upon the subject, which do you conceive the easiest death?" inquired the farmer.

Corbett looked anxiously for the reply.

"The easiest and the most speedy," said the Quaker, "I conceive to be immersion. Provided the drowning person be kept under water, a very short time must terminate existence. I was once the cause, under Providence, of restoring animation to a fellow-creature apparently drowned; and she described her situation as almost exempt from suffering."

Corbett turned full upon him, and, in tones of eager impatience, said, "the person was a female then?"

"Yes! a female of respectability."

"And how did her husband escape suspicion?" again questioned Corbett.

"Husband!" repeated the Quaker.

"I beg your pardon. I—I believe I misunderstood you. She had no husband."

"Oh, yes, she had. A husband who

would have sacrificed his own life to have preserved hers."

"Indeed!" Corbett again fell into a fit of musing, which continued until they reached Honiton, where they stopped to dine.

When the waiter brought in the wine, he informed the company that one of their returned chaises had picked up a poor woman and her little boy, about a mile off. That the child was in the agonies of death from eating something he found in a paper by the road side, which the doctor declared to be poison.

"Poison!" echoed Corbett, putting his hand to his pocket.

"The paper," continued the waiter, "which the woman still retains, with part of its contents, was marked worm powders, but the doctor declares it to be arsenic."

"The woman was wrong," said the Quaker, "in suffering her child to eat even worm powders found in that careless manner."

"The boy, sir," replied the waiter, "had stopped behind to pick some haws, and ran after her with the paper, but not before he had devoured a part of its contents. Dick, who is a good-natured lad, and remarkably fond of children, found him writhing with pain, and, as I said before, brought him and his mother along."

Corbett would fain have doubted; but, the mention of worm-powders, a device of his own, in case of accident, reduced it to a certainty, that the paper found, and the one he had thrown out of the coach window, were the same. He looked at his fellow passengers to see if suspicion was at all awakened; but no trace appeared in the countenance of either; and, when the waiter entered with the bill, and said the poor child was dead, he thought he made ample amends to the mother by sending her a crown.

His plans, before perfectly arranged, were by circumstances so disjointed, that he determined to remain in Exeter that night, in order to new model them. The

poison was relinquished, but Julia's death not the less firmly settled, though the how, and the when, required deliberation. He had heard that women's hearts were to be broken by ill-usage, but that was not the action of a day; besides, the stigma that would attach to his character, now so fair with those he wished to please. A pistol would effectually do the business; but they were instruments of sound, report might lead to detection, and thus end all his hopes at once. A watery grave might be provided without delay, and without noise; but, if he appeared at Tremorne, would not suspicion attach to him? Certainly; and suspicion, in his situation, was only inferior to defeat. We shall leave him to settle this matter on his pillow, whilst we look in upon his intended victim.

Julia, perfectly re-instated in the good opinion of her neighbours, and at peace with her own mind, passed her days in usefulness, her nights in tranquillity. Corbett's protracted stay was rather a matter of rejoicing than otherwise; since his re-

turn might impede her in the course she had laid down, and certainly would not add to her happiness. The man she had once with reason despised, no future action could make her respect; and the marriage, intended as an atonement for her injuries, failed to obliterate the remembrance of her anguish, when thrown upon the town to procure a scanty subsistence.

All her days of jubilee, if any such she had, were passed in the company of Mary. During the fine weather, frequent were the walks each took to enjoy the society of the other; but the short days had interrupted this intercourse for two months, when a fearful dream brought Mrs. Leigh unexpectedly to Tremorne.

Mr. Cavendish laughed, as she repeated the imaginary dangers from which she had rescued Julia;—Julia herself gave a faint smile of incredulity;—but aunt Susy, a firm believer in dreams,—superstitiously attached to omens, and a never-failing inquirer into the good and evil contained in the bottom of a tea-cup,—shook her

head, and declared Mary's dream foretold much tribulation, if not danger. My brother Cavendish," she added, "laughs at ghosts, but I know they often appear, either to prevent or revenge crimes."

"Did you ever see one, sister?" inquired the Vicar.

"I don't say I ever did, but wiser people than myself have. Did not I read in a book of yours, the other day, about two great French women, Duchesses or Countesses, I forget which, agreeing to appear to each other after they were dead?"

Mr. Cavendish smiled at her manner of describing the circumstance; but Mary begged leave to corroborate the appearance of ghosts, by relating an occurrence which really happened to her father and mother.

Aunt Susy stirred the fire,—snuffed the candles,—and rubbed her hands with anticipated enjoyment; whilst Mr. Cavendish, begging pardon for a moment, retired with the children.

On his return, he said, smiling, "now,

Mrs. Leigh, as much of the marvellous as you please. We are old enough to take the good, and refuse the evil; but the tender minds of children should be carefully guarded against the impressions such tales are calculated to produce. Infancy is not naturally timid, I believe less so than at a more mature age; if ignorant servants, and foolish old women, did not impress fear upon their minds, by threatening dark holes, black men, and all the *et cetera* which a fruitful imagination is ready to invent. By thus teaching, you convince them, against reason and common sense, that there is something to apprehend; and thus lay the foundation for fears and suspicions, which years and experience are not able to eradicate. But I am delaying much promised pleasure, and will no longer hinder the recital.

"When my father was in business," began Mary, "he commonly, in the summer months, travelled his own journies. On these occasions, my mother always accompanied him; not more for the benefit

of air and exercise, than the pleasure he took in shewing her the world, and thereby enlarging her mind.

"One day in the beginning of autumn, they stopped to dine at an inn, which, in former times, had been the magnificent mansion of a family now scarcely known in the village; for the last branch of it had died intestate many years before, and his property divided amongst numerous claimants residing in different parts of the kingdom.

"The hamlet was so pleasant, and the accommodations so excellent, that my mother expressed a wish to remain until the following day; but it was a matter of importance to my father, to go one stage further that evening, having made an appointment with one of his best customers. My mother, of course, yielded to necessity,—the gig was at the door, and every thing prepared, when a fainting giddiness overpowered her, and she sunk down in a fit.

"This necessarily delayed the journey;

and my mother, after her recovery, could not help rejoicing at the circumstance, as her wish to remain almost amounted to anxiety, though why, or wherefore, she was unable precisely to determine.

"At an early hour they retired to their apartment,——but, with your leave, my friends, I will continue my narrative in the first person, as my father's words made an impression indelibly imprinted on my mind, and it will prevent a repetition, tending to lessen the interest of the story." The company bowed, and Mary continued.

"The room we were shewn to," said my father, "was so lofty and spacious, that the single candle, with which the chamber maid preceded us, gave but a faint and partial illumination, all beyond was darkness and gloom: it had evidently been the state apartment. The bed was hung with mazarine velvet, which, by the little light reflected upon it, bore a mournful and melancholy hue; and the grim and ghastly figures upon the tapestry tended in a great measure to heighten that impression. I

lost little time in preparing for bed; but my wife, either from a mind prone to inquiry, or the natural curiosity of her sex, spent the best part of an hour in examining the room, and describing to me the figures, as they successively appeared upon the wall. At length, having finished her investigation, she came to bed, and soon sunk into a deep and heavy sleep. Not so with me. I counted the hours of twelve, —one,—and two,—as the strokes slowly reverberated from a neighbouring clock. The last sound had scarcely died away, when the door slowly opened, and an old gentleman, habited in a flowered silk morning gown, entered, bearing a taper.

"Supposing it to be some one who had mistaken the apartment, and that he would retire the moment he discovered his mistake, I silently watched his approach. But, without turning his attention to the right or the left, he slowly proceeded across the room, passed the foot of our bed, and having reached the other extremity, opened a door in the wall, so nicely concealed by

the tapestry, that no one could have suspected a closet in that situation, nor did he appear to open it by a key.

"Not conceiving I had any business to interrupt him, I remained perfectly quiet, but minutely noted his proceedings. The closet or cupboard contained drawers; he opened the centre one, as I conceived he had done the door, by means of a spring; and, taking out a parchment, continued gazing at it some time, then, carefully replacing it, closed the door, and, turning round, slowly crossed the room as before.

"As he passed the bed, my wife, whom I thought in a profound sleep, exclaimed, 'What a likeness!' and indeed the same idea was uppermost in my thoughts, though I had not given it words. Her observation caused the intruder to turn his head, but, without making the slightest apology for the disturbance his nocturnal visit was calculated to produce, he left the room, and carefully closed the door after him. 'You are right,' said I, when he was gone, 'the likeness is astonishing;

but the old gentleman might have taken some less objectionable opportunity for the perusal of his papers. I generally lock my door at an inn, but almost for the first time in my life omitted it.

"I paused, but my wife was again locked in sleep, and soon afterwards I followed her example.

"A bright autumnal morning roused us at rather an early hour, but, to my surprise, your mother never adverted to the past circumstance. 'I have waited, Mary,' said I, 'to hear your opinion of our noctural visitor, but his appearance seems to have escaped your recollection, although your memory is in general tenaciously correct.'

"'A visitor!' repeated she, 'a nocturnal visitor! I slept so soundly that if all the strangers at the house had come to our apartment, they would scarcely have succeeded in waking me. But had you really an intruder?'

"'We had. And what is very extraordinary, you, who pretend to have slept

so sound, discovered his likeness to poor John Stormont, almost before I did.'

" 'John Stormont! Why I dreamt of seeing an old gentleman, who resembled him most exactly, and who would leave him an immense fortune.'

" A narrative of the last night's adventure now followed; and, during breakfast, I summoned the landlord, described the intruder, and requested to know who, and what he was? But my amazement was considerably increased when he informed us that no person of that description lodged in the house, nor did he know any one living, at all answering to it. 'We have,' continued he, 'a gallery of old-fashioned family pictures, in the east-wing, and, now I recollect, one of them is drawn in a flowered morning gown, such as you describe.'

" I was now all eagerness to trace the adventure, and followed mine host to the gallery. But judge both mine and your mother's surprise, when we discovered the fac simile of her dream, and my waking vision, in the perfect resemblance of John

Stormont, which all the difference of dress could not do away. My wife would fain have persuaded me that I had likewise dreamt, in which idea she was confirmed, by the seeming impossibility of a door opening in the situation I pointed out. In vain we examined the tapestry, in every direction,—to no purpose did I trace my hand over the gigantic warrior, in whose wrist I felt assured the spring was concealed,—nothing appeared to corroborate my testimony,—and, though she was not able to shake my faith, respecting the reality of my over-night's adventure, I was giving up all further discovery as hopeless, when your mother declared there was a singular appearance in the left eye of the figure, not discernible in the other. Approaching the spot, she found the pupil moveable; and, lifting it up, a small brass bolt presented itself. This was doubtless the object of our search, though it lay rather remote from the place I described as the opening,—namely,—the separation of the hand from the extended arm of the

same figure. Your mother was for examining the closet then and there, but I opposed the search, until we had summoned a neighbouring magistrate to witness our proceedings. This was soon done, when, lo! and behold! the parchment contained the last will and testament of Jonathan Stormont, the identical gentleman in the flowered morning gown, supposed to die intestate; by which our old neighbour, poor John Stormont, became heir to immense wealth. A just reward for the manly fortitude with which he had borne poverty, and his industrious efforts to support a numerous and well-disposed family."

Mrs. Leigh received the thanks of the company, for her amusing story; after which, Miss Simpkin observed, with a smile of triumph, "now, brother Cavendish, I hope you are cured of your scepticism. The appearance of this ghost is too well authenticated to leave you in doubt."

"I never doubted the *possibility*, Miss Simpkin; and, to further so great a good as the appearance of this shadow produced,

to disbelieve the *probability* would perhaps be wrong. My chief objections arise from the supposed interference of supernatural agency, in cases where no good can be obtained, or evil prevented. The supreme being is systematically wise, and beneficently merciful; and would it be consistent with these attributes, to terrify poor, weak, mis-judging atoms, merely to shew his power? Believe me, Miss Simpkin, the appearance of unsubstantial beings is never permitted in *ordinary* cases, though in *extraordinary* ones, such, for instance, as Mrs. Leigh's amusing narrative points out, perhaps the means of discovering the legal heir, could in no natural way have been so readily ascertained; therefore, for the sake of argument, we will allow it. But, upon what principle can we uphold the appearance of a ghost, barely to signify that the person, so represented, departed this life at such a period, specifying the time; when, perhaps, the shadow only forestalled the regular intelligence by a few hours, and the premature information could answer

no purpose, than unnecessarily to alarm and terrify the object of his visitation. Dreams too, upon which the credulous lay great stress, are amongst the vulgar prejudices that cannot be too severely decried. The human imagination is scarcely ever at rest; but the thoughts which assail it, in the hours of sleep, are so intirely uncontrouled by reason, that we never feel astonished, though the scenes presented should be of a nature the most incongruous and improbable;—scenes that bear no analogy to any event that has, or, in all likelihood, ever will occur, and that we never could have imagined in our wakeful moments. Most commonly indeed, dreams are affected by the recent occurrences of the day, and this gives rise to the faith with which they are received. For instance: we have a sick relative or friend, whose illness has been the theme of our thoughts or conversation the preceding evening. Imagination in sleep proceeds progressively from sickness unto death, and the morning's post brings intelligence of the fact. Thus the dream

actually comes to pass, and thus the faith of weak people is confirmed. If dreaming of some dire calamity could prevent it, or the appearance of a ghost foretel some impending evil, it was in our power to frustrate, then indeed they would both have their uses; but, until this can be proved by general experience, I must beg leave to doubt the reality of the one, or the truth of the other, and to declare it, as my decided opinion, that ghost-seers and dreamers, are imposed upon by the bewildering effects of a distempered imagination, or a fanciful invention."

A heavy fall of snow, having confined the ladies for several days preceding to the house, they proposed, as the afternoon was frosty, bright, and cheering, to take a walk, when, just as they were setting forth, Frederick entered. This, of course, detained Mary until her husband had taken some refreshment, when both promised to join Mrs. Corbett in a pleasant avenue on the banks of the river.

Julia, deeply meditating on the scenes

of her past life, in which her marriage bore a principal share, slowly proceeded towards the wood. The walk to which she advanced was in summer a pleasant and shady retreat; now, it filled her mind with sensations she knew not how to account for, much less explain. The trees stripped of their verdure, and covered with snow, presented an aspect the most chilling and dreary. The sun, which shone brightly cheerful on the uncovered path, here scarcely shed his beams; and, the noise of a neighbouring water-fall, giving in the more genial season increased harmony to the scene, now sounded rudely boisterous, and added wildness to the bleak and wintery prospect.

Julia shuddered as her eye wandered through the comfortless glade; and she was on the point of returning, when the sound of distant footsteps, supposed to be those of her friends, gave her courage to proceed. She had advanced about a hundred paces, when the figure of a man, closely muffled, appeared at the other ex-

tremity of the walk. Her spirits, before violently agitated, though without any substantial cause, sunk at the first glimpse of a person, whom her fearful fancy portrayed as both deeply disguised, and evidently shunning observation; forgetting that the season of the year fully warranted his close wrapping coat, and, that his wish for concealment might, in fact, extend no farther than her own imagination. Be this as it may, she shrunk from encountering a personage so suspicious, and turned a wishful eye towards the path she had traced, not doubting the approach of Frederick and Mary. Greatly, however, were her terrors increased, when nothing met her vision, save a dreary, melancholy, and, but for her own footsteps, a trackless path. The sun, too, was at that moment obscured; and a piercing wind brought the snow in sheets from the leafless branches of the overhanging trees.

The time lost in deliberating what course to pursue, brought the unknown to the centre of the walk, apparently unconscious

that any being inhabited it, save himself. With folded arms and eyes intently fixed on the earth, he advanced rapidly; but his haste was the speed of a person seeming to run away from his own thoughts, rather than of one taking the exercise necessary to preserve warmth: for ever and anon he started, as though some fearful image presented itself which he was eagerly anxious to avoid.

Julia, seeing little probability of outstepping him, and dreading to encounter a stranger under present circumstances, judged it prudent to endeavour at concealment until he had passed; and, though the trees could only afford a partial shelter, the dreaded person appeared too much absorbed in self,—too deeply engaged in meditation,—to observe any thing, not immediately in his path. A tree of rather larger dimensions stood within a few yards, but to gain it she must advance towards the object it was her wish to shun; and, whilst she yet deliberated, he was rapidly approaching. With frantic haste

she reached the spot; but, ere she could secure her retreat, a dashing noise, as of something falling into the stream beneath, caused the unknown to raise his head, and Julia met his view.

Recourse to her hiding place was now worse than useless, because it would give the appearance of fear, and, perhaps, urge him to the commission of a crime he would not otherwise have imagined. Again she turned her head, in the vain hope of seeing her friends, or, at least, hearing their approaching steps; no object met her sight, —no sound saluted her ear,—save what was produced by the subject of her terror; and he, at the first glimpse of a female in this now unfrequented walk, gave a sudden start, and exhibited signs of emotion for which she could on no principle account. For a moment he turned round, took off his hat, and appeared to be adjusting his neckcloth; during which, Julia's feet were rooted to the spot, and her attention rivetted, as if by magic. When he again turned, his hat being somewhat

more raised than before, she clearly perceived that the object of her fear was a negro! This discovery, instead of giving her courage, which in calmer moments might have been the case, added to her terror; and, as he advanced, a suppressed scream and a hasty retreat behind the tree betrayed her emotion.

"What fear you?" said he, in a rough hoarse voice, but accents perfectly English, at the same time dragging her forward. "Has any foolish dream or inward monitor apprised you of your danger, that thus you shriek and tremble at the approach of a stranger? Forewarned—forearmed, is a wholesome motto; why did not you profit by it, and avoid this lonesome melancholy walk, calculated for deeds of darkness, such as I am predestined to perpetrate?"

"Deeds of darkness!" echoed Julia, almost fainting with alarm. "If pecuniary distress prompt you to actions repulsive to morality,—here—take my purse; and, if its contents are insufficient to relieve the

sufferings of—perhaps a beloved wife and innocent offspring,—I have power, through the medium of others, of still farther serving you."

"I believe you are an angel!" replied the man: "and, therefore, with less repugnance can send you to join the *company* of angels. I come not here upon the paltry pretence of taking your property, but something infinitely more valuable."

Julia shuddered under the ruffian's grasp; for the violation of her person was doubtless the horrid deed he threatened. Again she looked up the avenue, but no friendly succour was at hand; at length, falling on her knees, she besought his compassion, and invoked death in preference to the crime he meditated.

A savage laugh followed this interpretation of his words; to which he added, "and think you so highly of your charms, that I should risk my life for their enjoyment? No! Your person is *hateful* to me; and did it not stand in the way of my advancement, you might linger out a wretch-

ed life unheeded and unsought. But ambition points out a glorious path, and you, as the only impediment to attaining it, must be sacrificed."

The last speech was delivered in tones familiar to her ear. She gazed in silent agony upon the speaker; and, now first discovered, through the dusky light, that his features were shaded by a crape.

"Corbett!" she ejaculated, in a solemn tone, "is a premature death—death by your hands to be the fate of her whose life you have made most miserable? Believe me, I am not afraid to die,—nay, death would be a consolation, if inflicted by the hand of God! But clog not your soul with added guilt! Dare not to increase the catalogue of your crimes by precipitating me before the bar of justice to accuse you of murder! the murder of her you have sworn, in the Almighty's presence, to protect and cherish in sickness and in health!"

"All priestcraft!" interrupted Corbett. "Marriage is a political institution merely;

and, since I am tired of *you*, and you have no great cause to be satisfied with *me*, the best way is to part."

"Yes! *part* if you wish it, but not by *death*."

"There is no other way. Your death is the only security for my life,—at least, a life worth living; and, it is as unalterably decreed by fate, as our former union, or any of the seeming irregularities which happen in this fantastic world. But, I am losing time,—detaining you from the bar of justice, at which you threaten to be my accuser. Be it so. Since Omnipotence *pre-ordained* me to be a villain and a murderer, let Omnipotence *answer* for it; I cannot be *amenable* where I had no *choice*; and am fearless of the consequences."

He now seized Julia by the waist, and was hurrying her to the river, when Frederick and Mary made their appearance at the extremity of the walk. Their approach was seen by both at the same moment. Julia struggled with renovated strength at the welcome sight, whilst Cor-

bett, perceiving there was not a moment to lose, if he hoped to escape undiscovered, dashed her through the first opening, and hearing a plunge, which he doubted not would terminate according to his wishes, ran away with all the speed of guilty apprehension. Meanwhile, Frederick advanced with the utmost celerity. He found poor Julia struggling beneath the water, and only saved from the impetuous and rapidly flowing current, by her clothes having accidentally entangled themselves in the overhanging branches. The descent was deep; but Frederick, tearing off his coat, dashed into the flood, and raised her head above its surface, at the moment Mary appeared at the opening. A scream of joy announced her delight at seeing her friend in comparative safety; but a new difficulty arose, not easily surmounted. The bank was steep and slippery,—Julia incapable of helping herself,—and no assistance to be procured nearer than the village, and that was situated at the distance of half a mile. Frederick could, with great

exertion, raise his almost lifeless burthen high enough for Mary to lay hold of her arms; but no strength that she possessed could pull her up, or support her in that situation, until Frederick came to her assistance. To complete their distress, the evening was fast closing; and, the snow, which now fell in sheets, gave an obscurity to surrounding objects truly awful.

In this distress, Mary, as the only probable means of ultimately saving her friend, desperately proposed to brave the flood in her behalf, fully persuaded that her strength could support Julia until Frederick reached the bank.

However repugnant such a proposal might be to her husband, no alternative offered; and she was preparing to descend, after throwing aside her bonnet and pelisse, when a voice, not far distant, though the speaker was lost in the general obscurity, bawled out, "Hollo! Mrs. Corbett! Mr. Leigh! Where are you?" These welcome sounds effectually put a stop to Mary's heroism. She answered Luke with all the

force of which her lungs were capable; but, when the poor fellow arrived at the spot, and beheld the state of his beloved mistress, he sent forth a shout of distress, and was rapidly proceeding to disrobe himself, when Frederick pointed out where his immediate presence was necessary; and, in less time than we are describing the circumstance, Julia and her protector were safely landed, and the former carefully supported in the arms of Frederick and the servant.

"These umbrellas," said Luke, "that his reverence sent me with in such a hurry, are all but useless; for the snow cannot make Madam Julia wetter than she is, poor soul! You, Squire, are well soaked too. You chose a dismal day for your cold bath, but, if no serious ill follows, I know you won't mind a wet jacket to save my dear mistress. If, indeed, Madam Simpkin had slipped into the river——"

Mary interrupted Luke's discourse by begging them to proceed with all possible haste; otherwise, Julia had only been

saved from a watery grave to perish by cold.

The alarmed inhabitants of the Vicarage, whom Mary prepared, in some measure, for the shocking disaster, succeeded, by the assistance of Gossip, in restoring animation; but a cold succeeded which long baffled medical skill. During this period, Mrs. Leigh nursed her friend with the care and attention of a beloved sister; but, all inquiries respecting the person or motives of the assassin, were evaded by her with sedulous caution: and, when her brother and Mary found that she could not hear the circumstance mentioned without shuddering, and that it left a gloom upon her mind their utmost efforts were at times unable to remove, the subject was discarded in her presence, though frequently reverted to in their private conversation with wonder, and a certainty that some mystery lurked beneath her aversion to communicate.

This was still farther confirmed, when she put a decided and peremptory negative

upon the Vicar's proposal to advertize the villain; and declared she should never again know peace, if, by this or any other means, he were discovered.

At this declaration, Corbett once glanced across his mind, but as immediately vanished; for, to suspect the man whose recent marriage was an union of love,—whose letters breathed nothing but affection, and regret that any circumstance should detain him from her, was heresy against the faith he professed, and both uncharitable and unjust.

Corbett had scarcely cleared the wood, when he encountered the clerk of the parish, the identical man who assisted at his marriage; but the crape still covered his visage,—for, in the agitation of his mind he had failed to remove it,—and to this circumstance was he indebted for security.

Honest Hopkins was preparing to make his humble obeisance, a custom he never omitted to any one at all raised above his own level, when the complexion of the stranger at once relaxed the sinews of his

up-raised arm; for, the clerk of Tremorne was one of those who erroneously suppose that the sable part of mankind rank infinitely below themselves in the scale of existence, and, of course, are not entitled to the smallest respect. He, therefore, passed him with an inquisitive stare; wondering what business could have brought a black man to their village, from which he was in the proper direction, albeit, the path was little frequented at this season of the year.

His inquiries at Tremorne, for he failed not to mention the circumstance, were, however, unsatisfactory. No one had seen the person described, and the meeting would have sunk into oblivion, had not Julia's adventure recalled it to his recollection with superstitious horror. Belzebub himself he was sure would alone have attempted the life of Madam Corbett! and he worked up his weak mind to the conclusion, that satan, in whose power Julia once was, was so enraged at her return to virtue, that he sought this opportunity of meeting her alone, the black face giving

colour to the story, and finding his temptations of no avail, had in revenge plunged her into the stream; but, that Providence, as a reward for her resistance, sent her friends at the critical moment to save her.

This improbable fiction was soon circulated in the village; and Julia's character rose, in proportion as it was believed. Aunt Susy, finding the attempt at murder unattended by its usual precursor,—robbery, gave full credit to the report; and only wondered at the clerk's lack of curiosity to discover the cloven foot. "No wonder," she observed to Mr. Cavendish, "that Julia's face expresses horror whenever the subject is mentioned. Her trembling limbs and pale countenance plainly shew that she knew the person of the tempter, but fears to declare it, from a dread of farther enraging him."

Mr. Cavendish seldom disputed with his sister-in-law. When people are bigotted to a set of opinions, imbibed in childhood, and confirmed by years, the voice of wisdom, though she sing never so sweetly,

sings in vain. Reason and argument he knew availed little, when opposed to ignorance, and its concomitant, stubbornness: with such a combination he deigned not to battle, consequently, Miss Simpkin enjoyed the triumph of supposing her conclusions generally right.

CHAP. IX.

SELF-ACCUSATION,—FEMALE PERPLEXITY,—SOME RATIONAL ADVICE ON THE SUBJECT OF LOVE,—THE VILLAGE GOSSIP,—GUILT CONFOUNDED, —AND AN INJURED WIFE VINDICATED.

CORBETT stayed not to witness the effect of his murderous plans, but posted to London with infinitely greater speed than he had left it, meditating as he went, on the time that must necessarily elapse ere he could hail the blooming Fanny as his bride, and thereby become possessed of that wealth he had taken such guilty pains to procure. When he went to pay his respects in Lombard-street, he spoke of a slight indisposition having confined him to

the house, and regretted, with much shew of feeling, the absence of her whose society would have soothed his pain, and whose presence, in the hour of sickness, was peculiarly desirable.

Lady Ann assented to the truth of his observations, and was beginning a panegyric on Julia, when the postman's signal was followed by a letter, in the well-known hand of Mr. Cavendish. At the name of her correspondent, Corbett started, his countenance assumed a livid paleness,— and, rising from his chair, he retired to the window, to hide the confusion he was unable to conceal.

Lady Ann's attention was otherwise employed, but Fanny observed his emotion, and silently wondered what could give rise to it. When her Ladyship ceased reading, she gave the letter to her daughter, and inquired if Corbett had heard from Tremorne lately? No answer.

"Have you heard from Tremorne, Captain?" reiterated Lady Ann. "If not, my letter conveys intelligence."

"Of her death?" hastily inquired Corbett, turning round and shewing a face of uncommon meaning.

"You *have* received a letter then?" said Fanny, fixing her expressive eyes firmly upon his.

"No—Yes—Certainly. 'Twould have been strange if I had been the last person informed of a circumstance that so nearly concerns me."

"And yet," observed Fanny, still viewing him most attentively, "before the receipt of Lady Ann's despatches, you affected to know as little of the matter as ourselves, or wherefore your silence on a subject of so much importance to you, and by no means indifferent to us."

"I—I was on the point of informing you of the melancholy event, when the letter arrived."

"Considering the event in that light, Captain," replied her Ladyship, "your countenance, methinks, should have told the tale without the aid of words. Instead of which, now I recal the matter, your's

exhibited a slight degree of embarrassment indeed, but not one particle of the distress an affectionate husband does, and ought to feel for a wife, under Julia's circumstances. In short, Captain Corbett, the business is involved in mystery, and, if you value your own character, or the esteem of your friends, you will endeavour to develope it. Until that be satisfactorily done, as far as concerns yourself, you must not think me rude or inhospitable, if I decline receiving you either here or at Tremorne." At the conclusion of this speech Lady Ann rose, and, taking the arm of Fanny, retired.

As Corbett left the house, he breathed curses on his own mismanagement. "But who could have supposed," thought he, "that meddling Parson would have been so speedy in his intelligence? To-morrow *I* meant to have been the herald of Julia's accident, and could then have been composed enough to relate it with becoming gravity and feeling. Now, I am caught in a snare of my own weaving,—suspicion

rests upon me,—and how to elude it, unless by boldly shewing myself at Tremorne, I know not. Should Julia live, and I have too much reason to dread it, when I consider the mal-apropos appearance of those strangers, I feel confident she would not wilfully brand my name with infamy; but will not a consciousness of intended crime betray *myself?* the tremor of guilt shake my nervous system even to demonstration? It might,—it would,—under other circumstances, but here I am prepared to combat them; and since my presence can alone invalidate suspicion,—why, I have not played the hypocrite thus long to commit myself before the unsuspecting credulous inmates of the Vicarage."

Preparations were soon made, but, previous to his departure, he addressed Lady Ann.

"Madam,

"I am even now setting off for Devonshire; but, before I leave London, am

compelled to make a confession, which, though it may not exonerate me from a share of duplicity, will, I am convinced, acquit me of guilt.

"I visited Lombard-street this morning, perfectly unconscious of the evil tidings conveyed by Mr. Cavendish. What those tidings were, your Ladyship did not condescend to inform me, consequently, I am ignorant of the depth of my misfortunes; and when Miss Fitz-York taxed me with having received a letter, I honestly, candidly, and without hesitation, replied in the negative. At that moment, pride, or false shame, at the idea of my seeming unimportance in the family to which I had allied myself, forced from me a contradictory testimony, and naturally raised your Ladyship's surprise and suspicion. The latter must be removed by my journey to Tremorne, whither I should scarcely have the temerity to go, had I indeed practised any thing against the peace of its inhabitants.

What I have to dread, I know not, but

hasten on the wings of duty and affection to know the worst; and hope, when next I see Lady Ann and Miss Fitz-York, to be ranked as their *still*

"Devoted friend,

"and truly obedient servant,

"CHARLES CORBETT.

"St. James's Street, March 3, 1813."

When Lady Ann finished the letter, which she thought demonstrative of the writer's real sentiments, Fanny, who had been a vigilant observer of his every action, endeavoured not to conceal her contrary opinion. "Wherefore," she exclaimed, "his emotion at the mention of Mr. Cavendish? Your saying 'the letter conveyed *intelligence*,' did not necessarily imply *death*, or any accident that might *lead* to it; how then shall we interpret words so nearly allied to matter of fact, if he had no fore-knowledge of his wife's misfortune? Besides his countenance, at the moment, expressed rather exultation than dread; and though he pretends to explain the con-

tradiction of his words, the embarrassment of his manner,—the guilty confusion of his looks,—spoke volumes of evidence against him."

"My dear girl! Captain Corbett was never a favourite of yours, consequently, we must allow something for prejudice. But though I do not go the lengths you do in his condemnation, whilst any part of his conduct is hid in mystery, I shall firmly adhere to my resolution of not receiving him."

Whilst Fanny and her mother were discussing this business, Sir Herbert Huntley and Mr. Strictland entered. The assurance that Rose was well and happy, and considered by his family as an acquisition of the first importance, gave joy to the hearts of both. "I am only in town for a few days," said the Baronet, "and called in the city, not more for the pleasure of shaking hands with our worthy merchant here, than to inquire after your Ladyship and my dear Frances; judge then of my satisfaction and surprise at meeting you thus

unexpectedly. Had Lady Huntley dreamt of your being in town, it would have required something stronger than a husband's authority, to have detained her at Rose-Mount. On my way I dropped in, *en-passant*, at Newland-Abbey." Fanny's cheeks became tinged with crimson. "And," added Sir Herbert, without appearing to notice her confusion, "a scene took place, strange and unaccountable."

"Of what nature?" inquired Mr. Strictland.

"It originated in the casual mention of Corbett's marriage; a matter I conceived of perfect indifference to that noble family. One question led to another, for they were particularly inquisitive on the subject, when I inadvertently, — perhaps improperly, — hinted at reparation; in short, that the young Lady's character required a salvo."

"Surely, Sir Herbert, you were not so imprudent," said Lady Ann.

"It was an error, I confess; and, had I anticipated the effect it produced on young Talbot, I should have been more guarded.

The words had no sooner escaped my lips, than he looked the image of despair,—clenched his hands,—beat his forehead,—in a word, rushed out of the apartment with the fury of maniac."

"What explanation took place after his departure?" inquired her Ladyship.

"None. Some visitors that moment arrived, and prevented what I was most anxious to hear. My own construction of the business is, either that Leslie had some prior knowledge of Julia, or that Corbett, having made pretensions to one of the Duke's daughters, had been accepted; and yet, neither of these occurrences could have produced the agonizing effect I witnessed, unless some serious attachment had formerly subsisted between him and Julia Cavendish."

"That carries the face of improbability," replied her Ladyship, "because the fancied attachment must have commenced after her arrival in London, and then her situation was too well known to admit of the supposition."

"Is it," asked the Baronet, "quite impossible he should have known her in her days of innocence, when youth, added to her native loveliness, must have presented an object of uncommon fascination?"

Fanny listened with eagerness to Lady Ann's reply.

"Not impossible, certainly," said her Ladyship. "He might have met her during her residence in Exeter, but——"

"What? my dear mother," said Fanny, earnestly.

"I do not think Julia, beautiful as she then confessedly was, the kind of female to attract a man of Leslie Talbot's description. She was at that period gay and volatile; possessed fewer powers of mind at sixteen than her more amiable sister at a much younger age; and I must have a very different opinion of Mr. Talbot to suppose it possible he could be caught by mere youth and beauty; youth, attached to excessive giddiness,—and beauty, rendered less attractive by vanity and coquetry. Julia now, though less lovely, is more likely to

gain the attention of a man of feeling and sentiment than in her days of frivolity; but, even yet, if I have any penetration, she would not be the choice of Leslie Talbot."

"What your Ladyship says, is very just," replied Sir Herbert. "And as no disappointment to either of his cousins, in which Corbett can be concerned, could justify his momentary phrenzy, we must trust to time alone for an elucidation of his behaviour."

Fanny, during this conversation, was all ear; and, after Sir Herbert's departure, fell into a train of musing, so profound, that surrounding objects ceased to draw her attention. Leslie she had long considered as forming no part of her future felicity; but his welfare,—his happiness,—were still dear to her, and whether those depended on Philippa or Julia, was matter equally distracting. With the former she once thought it impossible he could be happy; but any serious attachment to the latter could be attended with nothing but

misery and disappointment. And was Leslie destined to waste his youth, to sacrifice those talents, intended for the ornament and grace of society, in fruitless and unavailing love? "Forbid it heaven!" she exclaimed, with energy.

Lady Ann had been for some time painfully perusing the countenance of her daughter, yet the solemnity of this apostrophe startled her. Fanny's up-raised look at the same moment caught the eye of maternal solicitude, and she blushed deeply.

"What subject called forth that pious ejaculation, my love?" inquired her Ladyship.

"Sir Herbert Huntley's intelligence, my dear mother, brought on a train of thinking,—various ideas produced an association the most painful,—and, in the ardour of the moment, I breathed a short but sincere prayer."

"In favour of Leslie Talbot, I presume."

Fanny turned aside her head, and brushed away a tear.

"Sensibility, my dear girl," continued Lady Ann, "is worthy of praise, if kept within due bounds; but when it degenerates into the weakness of loving a man, whose preference is given to another, it becomes censurable, and must be discouraged. Good sense will fight against it, because it holds forth no prospect, even remote, of happiness. Delicacy will wage war with it, because no young person, with proper feelings, but would blush at the idea, and be ashamed of a preference without return. Even the common pride of the sex will battle a weakness so degrading; for the female must be lost to all sense of dignity, who would not exert the powers heaven has bestowed, in conquering a passion, reason stamps with folly and imprudence. Nothing but the attempt, I am convinced, is wanting. You have a mind constitutionally energetic, and, I trust, education has rather tended to strengthen than relax it. The arguments I once used to Lord Moseley, I need not now repeat; they appeared, at the moment, to carry

conviction, and your memory is too tenacious not to remember them."

"I both remember, and will profit by them," replied Fanny, with energy. "This is the last time, my dear mother, you shall have cause to lecture your Fanny on the subject of love; and that Leslie may the more effectually be banished from my thoughts, let him likewise be banished from our conversation."

"Not so, my love. We must neither seek nor shun the subject. His name would unavoidably occur in mixed parties, and, by not using your ears to the sound, you might betray an anxiety that would necessarily excite observation. Besides, such is the contradiction of our nature, prohibited subjects are apt to recur much oftener than is consistent with a wish to drive them thence; therefore, 'tis wisdom, as well as policy, neither to invite nor discourage conversation of a painful kind. By this method, well-regulated minds are brought into subjection,—the passions become subservient to reason,—and exist-

ence, on such terms, is indeed a blessing the headstrong and impetuous know nothing of."

Fanny profited so much from her mother's advice, that, ere many days elapsed, she thought herself competent to speak with calmness on the subject, and to meet young Talbot with composure. Whether that would really have been the case, had temptation been thrown in her way, we do not take upon us to assert; but as Leslie never crossed her path, we leave her, at present, to the full enjoyment of an opinion grateful to herself and pleasing to Lady Ann.

Corbett's journey was by no means an excursion of pleasure. Julia, if she survived, he knew was too generous, too placable, to betray him wilfully; but might not a discovery have escaped her, in the moment of returning reason, when her faculties were under the dominion of weakness,—perhaps delirium? or might not her brother's superior influence lead her to confess the author of her wrongs? If so,

he was running into the very jaws of danger, with no other alternative whereby to establish his character either at Tremorne, or, what was of far more consequence, with Lady Ann and her daughter.

The coach passed the village at a distance of about two miles; rather a favourable circumstance; for Corbett wished for a more private entry than could be obtained by the eclat of a carriage, thinking it prudent to sound the sentiments of the inhabitants, ere he ventured to shew himself: for this purpose nothing could be more convenient. The village barber lived at the extreme end of a street he was now approaching, a spice of his office could be obtained without suspicion of any latent design; and who so talkative, who so well acquainted with the private concerns of the place, as the tonsor?

The first appearance of the man, whose reception would determine his fate, as far as regarded immediate proceedings, was, in many respects, favourable. There was a sobriety, a gravity in his demeanor. that

foreboded the fulfilment of his dearest wish; for, to what could he attribute it, but to the solemnity usually assumed, when we have to announce tidings of a melancholy nature, or see a person, for the first time, labouring under deep affliction?

Corbett chose to appear ignorant of all that had passed; and, whilst the operator sharpened his razor, inquired, with much apparent interest, after the family at the Vicarage?

"Is your honour then to learn," inquired the village orator, "the misfortunes of that worthy family?"

"Misfortunes, friend? Of what nature?"

"Poor madam Julia——"

"Speak! Say, what of Julia?"

"Poor lady! There was not a dry eye in the village; and the monster must have had a heart as black as his face to compass her death"

"Is she then *really* dead?" said Corbett, in accents that betrayed more eagerness than grief. The attention of honest Suds was diverted from his strap; he fixed

his eyes attentively upon the Captain, whose eager gaze fell under his penetrating look, but, quickly recovering himself, he added, "she was indeed an angel; and none but the devil himself could have achieved so black a deed."

"So neighbour Hopkins asserts," rejoined the barber. "Nay, he further says, he saw the cloven foot; but that, your honour, I don't credit. The wretch was not Belzebub, but a man; and yet, what man could find in his heart to drown your spouse, noble Captain, is a mystery you will doubtless endeavour to discover."

"Certainly. No efforts of mine shall be wanting," appearing to be much afflicted; during which the barber prepared his lather in silence Then wiping his tearless eyes, he added, "when——when was my poor wife interred?"

"Sir!" said the shaver, stretching his eyes beyond their due bounds.

"I say, when did the melancholy event occur?"

"Oh! The accident, your honour,

took place on Monday, and Madam Corbett, with care and good nursing, is, I understand, surprisingly recovered."

"Re—recovered!" groaned the Captain. "Is—is she indeed recovered?"

"To the great joy of the whole village, your honour."

Corbett found it more difficult to conceal his real grief at his wife's recovery, than to affect sorrow at her supposed demise. He had heard more,—much more than he wished, and continued silent during the operation, which Suds now zealously began: not so the shaver; he was fond of hearing himself talk; and seldom having that opportunity to one in the Captain's sphère, resolved to make the most of it. Besides, he was one of those common class of gossipers who, provided they can find a hearer, are regardless of an answer. Having, therefore, given a fine edge to his razor,—adjusted the napkin,—and placed the shaving-rag in the best possible situation,—he proceeded to use his hand and tongue with equal dexterity.

"Hopkins, the clerk, Captain," he began, "is the only one who can describe the person of the intended murderer. He met him at the end of the wood, and says, he should know him again from a thousand. Now, I say he cannot, and why? One black man's face is so like another, that I never could tell the difference; and Hopkins acknowledges that this chap's hat was flapped over his countenance, with design, no doubt, to conceal him, and that he only caught a glimpse of it. Now, what I say is this, if he had but a slight view, and in the twilight, too, how can he swear to him? If, indeed, he met him in the same spot, and muffled up in the same manner, then and there he might know him, but not otherwise. What motive, your honour, could any man, black or white, have to murder so good, so kind, so charitable a woman?"

A short pause was allowed to this interrogatory, but finding his hearer wrapped in silence, he proceeded: "I'll tell you. He did it at the instigation of the devil;

for, as to his being the prince of darkness himself, I don't believe a word of it, and why? Belzebub has never appeared upon earth in his own proper person since the time of our Saviour. Besides, the villain who pushed poor Miss Julia—I beg your pardon, Captain,—I mean Mrs. Corbett, into the river, must have a heart blacker than the very devil's, and will cry in vain in the next world for a drop of water to cool his tongue."

"D—mn——n!" cried Corbett, starting from his chair. "How dare you address such discourse to me?"

"I beg your pardon, Captain; but, I thought it would be a consolation to know that Madam Julia's murderer,—for a murderer he is, to all intents and purposes,—will not escape in the next world, whatever he may do in this."

Corbett had been thrown off his guard once; but he listened to this second denunciation in sullen silence; and, after paying for what, in fact, he did not want, stalked away; but, the most trying scene

was yet to come. He found from the cordiality with which the villagers saluted him, that he was *generally* unsuspected; but might not *individual* confidence, accidentally or artfully imposed, have betrayed him? And in that case, would the forbearance of Mr. Cavendish spare the guilt even of a brother? No! he felt convinced he would not, and all his hopes depended on the Vicar's ignorance.

With as much confidence as he could assume, he entered the hated mansion, and was received by Aunt Susy with more than usual cordiality, mixed with condolence on the family calamity, and assurances that Julia was fast recovering from the accident, but remained low and spiritless, from a cause to which they could assign no reason. Mr. Cavendish now entered from the garden, and convinced Corbett he had nothing to dread from his knowledge; but, Mary coming soon afterwards with a message from Julia, instead of greeting him as the husband of her dearest friend, maintained a scornful silence, and

viewed him with looks of horror and affright.

Corbett's before confident eye fell, when he beheld these unequivocal shuddering marks of suspicion; and guilt as completely tied his tongue, as disgust and contempt did hers. She was, however, the first to recover, and her solemn promise to Julia operated as a charm to subdue her feelings, at least, to disguise them. "You arrive at Tremorne, Captain," said she, endeavouring to suppress her agitation, "at a most interesting period to Julia's *friends*. Did chance direct your journey?"

"By no means," he replied. "Lady Ann Fitz-York informed me of Julia's accident———"

"Accident!" echoed Mary. "Give it a more proper name. Call it the treacherous attempt of a villain,—a wretch, lost to all sense of honour or shame; but, if he escape public delinquency, retributive justice will, in one form or other, overtake his crime, and exhibit to the world a monument of God's wrath against murder."

Mr. Cavendish, when he despatched his letter to Lady Ann, wrote one also to Corbett; but Julia, who dreaded nothing so much as seeing her premeditated assassin, except the idea of his being brought to justice, pleaded for its suppression, and her arguments, though by no means satisfactory, succeeded. To every question relative to the adventure, we have before said, she was inexplicably silent; and that reserve in all probability retarded her recovery; for, as Shakespeare very justly observes,

———" the grief which does not speak,
Whispers the o'er fraught heart, and bids it break."

So Julia, by hoarding up her griefs, overcharged her bosom, and had not the secret found vent in sleep, she might have been the victim of a too scrupulous delicacy. In this unconscious way, Mary, whom no argument could persuade to leave the chamber of her friend, got an insight into the dreadful mystery; and, by revealing her well-founded suspicions, became pos-

sessed of the whole transaction, after binding herself by the most sacred ties, not to betray her husband's guilt. So Mary vowed; but, it was accompanied with a mental reservation that Corbett himself should deeply *feel* her knowledge, whenever chance threw his detested person in her way.

Mary Leigh's character was mildness; and no circumstance less dear than the safety of her friend, could have had power to raise the fierce resentment which sparkled in her eyes and animated her whole figure, at sight of the monster who planned her destruction.

"Your warmth in the cause of your friend," said Mr. Cavendish, in answer to Mary's last speech, "does honour to your attachment; but is, I conceive, rather ill-timed. Captain Corbett's feelings must be abundantly excited, and our endeavours should rather tend to comfort than irritation." Here Corbett turned to the window with well counterfeited agitation, and the Vicar proceeded. "The action which

nearly cost Julia her life is involved in mystery beyond my power to penetrate; since it was not attended by robbery, or any of the common incentives to murder. Revenge or enmity, which in some bosoms might tempt the act,—I trust they are few in number,—she, in her own person, is too good, too harmless, to produce. But, may not her husband have a foe, who, too cowardly to attack *him*, chose to resent a real or supposed injury on his *beloved partner?*"

"Um!" said Mary, with a sneer.

"It is generally said," continued Mr. Cavendish, "I know not with what justice, that negroes are revengeful: have you an enemy of that complexion?"

"An implacable one."

"Then he was the assassin."

"'Tis very like."

"The assassin was no *negro*," cried Mary; "but one of those deceptive villains who murder under a *mask*."

"How know you this?" inquired the Vicar. Mary was silent, from a conscious-

ness that she had already betrayed more than she ought.

"Has Julia said as much?" demanded the Vicar.

"Not in direct terms," answered Mary, "but by implication."

"If Julia would say all she knows, Captain," said Mr. Cavendish, "I am persuaded the wretch might be traced. Use your endeavours. To me she is provokingly silent, fearing no doubt to involve me in a business unbecoming my function."

"But, as the Captain can have no scruples on that head," added Mary, "this visit, if it lead not to a discovery, may, if well managed, preserve Julia from the villain's future machinations. Shall I inform my friend of your arrival?" "If—if you please." Mary now retired, but returned almost instantly, to say, "Julia was prepared for the interview;" and added, as they ascended the stairs, "my friend wishes *this* meeting to be as *private* as your *last*. But what pledge have I that it will not be

attended with consequences still more fatal?"

"A pledge the most binding."

"What is it?"

"*Existence;* and what is more dear, *public estimation.*"

"True: therefore I trust you. Your life and character are in my keeping; provoke me not, by any future act, to give them up to public justice and public detestation."

What passed between Julia and her husband, remained a profound secret to every one, except Mary; but, the conclusion of the interview proved the termination of Corbett's visit, for he left Tremorne immediately, to the no small surprise of Mr. Cavendish and Aunt Susy.

"Don't tell me of penitence," said Mary, after Julia had made her communication; "there was a lurking mischief, a malignant triumph in his eye, as he left the house; which your weakness in writing the letter has, in some measure, explained."

"After freely forgiving his attempt up-

on my life," replied Julia, " to have refused the trifling favour of a letter, would have been a littleness, I hope I am incapable of."

" What end was it to answer? I'll venture my existence he is plotting something against the peace of Lady Ann or her daughter."

" No, no! bad as he confessedly is, I do not think him base enough for that. His circumstances are embarrassed,—Lady Ann has promised her influence to procure him a lucrative situation,—and my writing was merely to convince her Ladyship of his having been at Tremorne."

" It seems, then, she had her doubts of his *daring* to appear here."

" I know not, nor is it of much importance. Henceforward, let his name be consigned to oblivion. We are separated, I trust for ever in this world, and I have no worse wish towards him than to hope we may meet in the next."

Mary, whilst present with her friend, conformed to her wishes; but his remem-

brance would intrude, spite of every effort to drive it thence; and with it was associated something of danger to Lady Ann or Fanny. Mrs. Leigh, I need not now inform my reader, was habitually superstitious. A dream had brought her to Tremorne, and its successful termination confirmed her faith. Might not fears and doubts, she could not conquer, be likewise a presentiment of evil? and could she acquit herself if she omitted to warn the friend and benefactress of her Edward? Her vow to Julia prevented an open and full eclaircissement; but, a hint from some unknown friend would answer every purpose, with one so cautious and prudent as her Ladyship. Full of this plan, she despatched the following anonymous note.
"A sincere friend cautions Lady Ann Fitz-York against Captain Corbett. His acquaintance is neither honourable nor safe."

Her mind was considerably relieved by this slender communication, though by it she had probably ruined Corbett's hopes of advancement. The *advancement* he really

deserved, she feared would never overtake him; and his worldly prospects already exceeded his deserts, however embarrassed they might be.

Corbett waited a week ere he presented himself and his credentials in Lombard-street; for, to have seen Julia, without remaining some days with her, would, he thought, scarcely set aside Lady Ann's suspicions; meanwhile, the cautionary note arrived, which for ever excluded him. On sending up his name, he was unceremoniously told that her Ladyship was engaged. He next had recourse to the letter, "favoured by Captain Corbett," written by his express desire upon the envelope,—but this was equally unsuccessful, "Lady Ann could not be seen." Boiling with rage, and hoping the period of vengeance would arrive, he turned from the once hospitable door, and stalked back to his solitary lodging, in a frame of mind fitted for enterprises of mischief; though what they were, or how to be accomplished, he knew not.

Under almost any other circumstances,

Lady Ann would have treated the anonymous intelligence with contempt; but this came at a period so big with Julia's fate, bearing also the Exeter post mark, that she would have thought herself criminally careless, had she again received the man whose conduct was become suspicious; but of whom she could have no fears that affected her daughter, and personal apprehensions were out of the question.

Mrs. Bloomfield and Barbara dropped in soon afterwards, when the universal subject of the day was introduced by the Widow with her usual strength of expression.

"What do these wise law-givers of ours mean to do, Strictland, with this poor, dear, persecuted woman?"

"My dear Madam you must name the object of your solicitude, before I can answer to the purpose."

"Don't provoke me by pretending ignorance. There is, at this moment, but one topic of conversation from Hyde Park-corner to Tower-wharf."

"Now I understand you, Widow."

"Well; what do they mean to do with her, I say? Decapitation has been had recourse to before now, when a good and virtuous wife stood in the way; and I don't think husbands are a bit better than they were then."

"Perhaps *husbands* may not, but, thank heaven, the *laws* are."

"In themselves; but, are the administrators less venal, the ministry less corrupt? Unless you can answer in the affirmative, I tell you, she has every thing to dread from a cabal headed by,——but I won't call names, though my tongue can scarcely be kept within bounds."

"The investigation has certainly acquitted the person you allude to of criminality," said Lady Ann; "but imprudence must attach to her."

"Define what imprudence is, my dear lady," replied the Widow, "before you attack her with it."

"A want of decorum,—the improper admission of male visitors——"

"This is imprudence in England, but it bears another interpretation on the continent. A *want* of decorum *here* is the *height* of decorum in *other* countries; and, it would be cruel indeed, situated as she is, to limit the number or sex of her visitors. Listen, my dear Madam, to a short history. The female we speak of, came to this country a stranger alike to its inhabitants and customs, not knowing even the man she was bound by vows to love and honour. For a while, a short while, every attention was paid to her situation and character; the females of her husband's family visited and were visited; in a word, she was treated, both by them and their acquaintance, as a person whom it was honourable to know and virtuous to respect. From some cause, which will perhaps ever remain a mystery, these attentions, this respect, were withdrawn,—she was shunned by her spouse and his relatives, and the contagion spread itself to their minions and dependents. To add misery to mortification, her daughter, the

only child of her ill-starred miserable union, was torn from her arms, placed in the hands of strangers, the mother debarred from seeing her child, and all this, 'without a cause assigned or reason given.'"

"Cruel!" said Fanny.

"In disposition sociable,"—continued the Widow, "by constitution cheerful,—and habituated from infancy to a freedom and latitude of manners unknown among us;—left to depend—not upon her own choice of company, but upon the casual society that offered;—can we wonder that some proved unworthy of her *confidence*, though they were unable to affix a stigma on her *character?* To effect this great point, spies were placed about her person,—every art that *power* or craft could devise was practised, in *hopes* that some lucky chance would operate against her; but, as none such occurred, her words were tortured into a wantonness,—her actions into crime,—and manners, in themselves innocent, represented as the grossest disloyalty and guilt."

"There is too much truth in what you say, Widow," said Mr. Strictland.

"Vain was every attempt," continued she, without noticing the interruption, "made by this injured wife, and her staunch, her virtuous advisers, to bring the matter before a proper tribunal,—to investigate her cause legally:—the junto, who wished her destruction, were well convinced a public trial would acquit her, and therefore declined it. Thus the matter rests at present. Every virtuous heart burns with indignation at her wrongs, and curses the foul faction that oppress injured and exalted worth."

"You have made out the lady's case like an able advocate, Widow," said Mr. Strictland.

"It does credit both to your heart and understanding, madam," added Fanny.

"In the cause of female innocence, my good mother will never tire," said Barbara.

"It is the cause of an injured *wife* and *mother*, child; and every *married* woman in the kingdom ought to stand forth in her

defence. But, some are too prudish, others too indolent, and a third class too soul-less to vindicate her. I was in a party last night, most of the individuals were known to me, and, had I wanted proof of the justice, the goodness, the uprightness of her cause, there was sufficient evidence at hand; for, every really good and virtuous man and woman were in her favour, whilst she was reprobated only by the *base*, the *worthless*, and the *venal.*"

CHAP. XI.

VAUXHALL,—MUCH MORTIFICATION AND DISTRESS,—THE ARREST,—A DEPARTURE IN GOOD COMPANY,—AN EQUIVOQUE,—AND A FAMILY PARTY.

NOTHING of moment occurred for the ensuing two months, except a formal proposal of marriage, on the parts of Lord and Lady Mountcastle, and as formal a rejection by Lady Ann and Fanny. In other respects, the family intercourse was kept up, and Moseley made daily advances in the good graces of Barbara.

Corbett appeared, during this period, either to have abandoned his schemes of vengeance, or, as was most probable, could not form any compatible with his own safety. Be this as it may, since no cir-

cumstance served to renew the recollection, he was not more completely forgotten than the anonymous note.

Vauxhall was the only place of amusement Fanny had not yet seen; and Lady Ann easily yielded to Moseley's intreaty, that she should join the party, consisting of himself, Lady Maria, and Miss Bloomfield, provided Mr. Strictland made a fifth. "One gentleman," she observed, "will find the care of three ladies rather a troublesome task; besides, the gravity of his appearance will give a reputable sanction to the expedition, it might otherwise want."

Fanny made instant application, but her guardian had a particular and not to be dispensed with engagement; otherwise, the proposal, he assured her, would have given him infinite pleasure. Her Ladyship read mortification in the countenance of her daughter; Moseley too, looked disappointed. At length, taking her Ladyship's hand, he said, "surely, my dear madam, you dare trust your daughter to

my care. One gentleman is a sufficient *sanction*, and will be found a powerful *protection*, if any such be wanting. Since I was flattered with the hopes of my fair cousin's company, I shall not be half happy without it; and the ladies I know will be out of temper the whole evening for want of it." Fanny's looks spoke yet more powerfully than Moseley's words; and Lady Ann, unable to resist their pleadings, suffered herself to be persuaded, with a proviso, that the youthful trio took their tea in the city, when it should be her care to send them away early, and she trusted their own prudence would hurry them home soon after midnight.

Those of my readers who can recollect their astonishment and pleasure, when this gay and animating place first met their view, may judge of our heroine's emotions; those who have never seen Vauxhall-gardens, on a gala night, can form no idea of them. A description, — frequently overcharged,—of almost any other place of amusement, would damp actual enjoy-

ment, but no inflation of language can properly describe this scene of enchantment; and Fanny, as if purposely to enhance her surprise, had heard it mentioned merely as an illuminated garden, where she would hear tolerable music and decent singing. Thus prepared, we must not wonder if, for a moment, she was unable to express her feelings, and almost to fancy herself transported into the regions of romance. Her companions silently enjoyed the consternation she strove not to conceal, and walked, or stood still, in compliment to her movements. At length she turned towards them, as much as to say, is all this real? and then first discovered that surprise was confined to her own bosom, and blushed to find herself an object of general attention.

As yet the gardens were but thinly attended; but several groups, who had followed Moseley and his friends, lingered in their vicinity, some through curiosity, but more in admiration of the fair stranger. Amongst the loungers, whom neither of

these motives detained, were Sir Lawrence Lounge and the Reverend Mr. Lillyman. Upon the first glimse of Fanny they looked anxiously at her companions, dreading to encounter their old torment the widow; but the present party were young and lively, and possessed that air which characterizes people of fashion.

The Baronet dropping his companion's arm, advanced with a sliding bow towards our heroine, and hoped he had the superlative felicity of seeing her well? Sir Lawrence was so strongly associated with Newland-Abbey, and days that would never return, that, in spite of her resolution, and the promise given to Lady Ann, she found it impossible to answer this plain question without evident confusion. Mr. Lillyman, who had followed close upon the heels of his friend, in some measure relieved her, by observing, "hopes, Baronet, imply doubt; and Miss Fitz-York's angelic countenance is sufficient evidence of health, without any corroborating testimony. Charming place, ma'am, that Newland-Abbey,—no

restraint,—every one does as he pleases. I have christened it Liberty-hall, have I not, Sir Lawrence?"

"So you say, Lilly; and I durst venture a cool hundred, 'tis the first christening you have been engaged in since your installation."

"Done: I christened two of Miss Auburn's terrier puppies, only last week, and the ceremony was attended with much pomp and parade."

Fanny looked at this pretended votary of religion with disgust, bordering on antipathy; and never so entirely wished for the company of Mrs. Bloomfield, as at this moment. Mr. Lillyman was a weak and a trifling character; but she now first conceived it possible that a minister of the gospel could glory in profaneness, and turn one of our most holy sacraments into ridicule. Gently pressing her cousin's arm, by which she held, she said, "had we not better proceed, my Lord? If we are fortunate enough to stumble upon *Mrs. Bloomfield*, she will make an addition to

our party, these gentlemen will gladly avail themselves of."

"I would go the d—l to avoid the old scarce-crow," said Sir Lawrence.

"And I would bear you company, Baronet," added Lillyman. "I don't know what such old cats *do* crawling between heaven and earth."

"You forget your usual politeness, gentlemen," said Fanny. "Mrs. Bloomfield is *my particular friend*."

"And *my dear honoured mother*," interrupted Barbara. "But," added she, archly, "we cannot wonder if these gentlemen are a little sore on the subject, since it is as clear as any problem in Euclid, that *they* could never open their lips in her presence without subjecting themselves to the lash of censure, and the castigation immorality and vulgar breeding are sure to meet with."

"A chip of the old block, Lilly!" whispered Sir Lawrence.

"So it appears, Baronet, and I think

we had better sheer off, for fear the old block itself should come to her assistance." They then turned to make their parting bow, but found their friends had walked away without considering the ceremony at all necessary.

"D——d low, Baronet."

"Or else cursed high, Lilly. But let us *follow*, and that will be a tolerably certain way of not *meeting*."

After Moseley and his fair trio had made the tour of the gardens, during which they were regaled with music from various groups, they repaired to a box, not more for refreshment than to listen to Fanny's artless and natural wonder at every thing she saw and heard.

"How delightful are first sensations," said Maria.

"Yes, my dear sister," replied Moseley, "if they happen to be *pleasureable* ones."

"Oh! that is taken for granted. I never envied any body's feelings as I have done Fanny's this evening. Make the most

of them, my dear cousin, for perhaps it is not given us to enjoy such above half a dozen times in our lives."

After their refreshment, Fanny proposed another stroll, which was immediately agreed to. The gardens were, by this time, crowded, but perfectly peaceable; for disorder and riot had not yet shewn their unseemly faces. Every countenance looked gay and animated,—every voice breathed tones of good humour,—and distant music broke upon the ear in enchanting melody. The atmosphere was perfectly serene,—the full orbed moon shed her lucid beams upon the uncovered path, and slyly peeped wherever a fracture in the overhanging foliage invited her approach. In short, it was a night fitted for *contemplation*, if secluded from the busy haunts of men; surrounded by a crowd of beings, all seeking the one great end,—*pleasure*,—it contributed in no mean degree to enhance it; and perhaps no party present enjoyed it with a greater [illegible]t than ours. Moseley was surrounded by th[illegible] beings, the dearest

to him in existence, and to contribute to their amusement and delight, he left no effort unessayed.

He was in midst of an interesting description, when Fanny, whom chance had placed on the outside, felt some one pull her by the gown. Instantly she turned; when a young man of rather vulgar appearance, although sprucely dressed, begged her pardon, and, in the same breath, inquired if she had lost any thing? Upon replying in the negative, he added, "because I have found a valuable ornament, which, I imagine, fell from either you or your companions;" and, opening his hand, he shewed a brilliant sprig of exquisite workmanship.

"The jewel does not belong to me or my party, friend," replied Fanny; "but, if you advertise it, the owner will be found, and liberally reward you for your honesty."

As he awkwardly bowed his thanks, she turned to join her friends, but her surprise was unspeakable when she found them

gone. They could, however, be at no great distance, and with hasty steps she passed the crowd. A few yards brought her to the termination of the walk,—she turned the angle, in full expectation of beholding them,—when her distress was increased to a painful height, by finding the avenue she now entered branch off in two directions. She turned her eyes to the right, but no party appeared, amongst the seemingly impassable multitude, resembling her's. On the left then she fixed her fearful gaze, and, at a small distance, beheld a figure towering above the rest, which she had no doubt was Moseley.

Swift as the intervening pedestrians would allow, she passed along; but, oh! grief and disappointment? the group she sought with such avidity were strangers. To increase her fears, a gentleman, as she passed, called out "whither so fast, my love?" By returning to the junction of the two walks, which seemed to be her prevailing wish, it was still a chance that she would be going further from her friends;

and the idea of again passing the person who had so freely remarked her flight, was repugnant to her delicacy, and on no account to be hazarded. In this dilemma, she had no alternative but to proceed.

The company were, generally, walking in the same direction as herself, which was some comfort, if any could be indulged in her situation; because the starers were quickly left behind, and had no opportunity of tracing features they might at a future period recollect. By this time she had outstripped the slower movements of the crowd, and found herself comparatively alone; when a voice, she recognised as that of her former questioner, called out, "stop, my dear, and accept of a companion."

The insulting freedom of this speech added to her terrors, and convinced her that she was indeed an object of suspicion "Oh, my dear mother!" she silently ejaculated, "why did I not listen to your counsel? Why persevere in visiting this dangerous place without my guardian?"

The gentleman now approached, and attempted to take her hand with the freedom of an old acquaintance. But, with a spirit he did not expect,—a spirit ennobled by the dignity of virtue,—she evaded his intention, and insisted,—proudly insisted,—upon his leaving her.

"What, you have made an appointment in this retired walk with some other spark, I suppose; if so, speak the word, my dear, and I am gone. I scorn to intrude upon the property of another."

"Cease your licentious ribaldry: for, unfortunate as I now appear, I have a friend not very distant, who will make you repent this outrage."

"Your beauty, lovely girl, renderèd more desirable by this charming spirit, would command a regiment of friends. Would I were the happy favoured individual. He must be an insensible puppy to keep you waiting here, and if you follow my advice, you'll serve him as he deserves. A bird in the hand, you know——"

Fanny looked with all the contempt she

could command, but deigned no further parley. At that moment, a gentleman, in military uniform, advanced from the direction in which she still kept walking, whom, on a nearer approach, she discovered to be Ensign Gaskell. Perhaps there was not a man in the whole range of her acquaintance she would not sooner have owed an obligation to. His pert forwardness and vulgar presumption had frequently annoyed her, nor had he a single virtue or good quality to counterbalance these; but he was known to her, and, in the choice of evil, his company was preferable to the insolent stranger's.

By this time he was within a few paces, and, having made up her mind to seek his protection, she determined to do it with as good a grace as possible. "Mr. Gaskell," she said, "you are met in a happy hour to relieve me from the society of this gentleman, who, mistaking my character, has not behaved with the politeness due to my sex and situation."

"If I have judged erroneously," said

the stranger, "I beg your pardon; yet, surely that is impossible. A female, young and lovely, without protection, and evidently making choice of this sequestered walk, cannot be other than I suspected. But since you have found a person more to your liking,—though curse me if I think comparisons are not altogether in my favour,—I take my leave with all *due respect.*" So saying, he bowed with much mock gravity, and left them.

"Miss Fitz-York at Vauxhall, without a party!" exclaimed Walter, as soon as he recovered from his astonishment. "It looks suspicious, certainly, as the stranger observed; but you acted very wisely in seeking my protection, because we gentlemen of the army are famous for our devotion to the fair sex. Come, take my arm; we'll go and get some refreshment; I'm confounded hungry, so I dare say you are, and eat what you will, I'll stand treat for old acquaintance sake."

Fanny felt nothing but disgust at what he intended as the perfection of kindness

and good breeding; still she ventured not to shew her disapprobation, but only said she had already supped, and was most anxious to find those friends, accident had separated her from.

"Oh! never fear, my charming girl," said Walter, as he forcibly drew her arm through his. "You will find no friends that will take better care of you than myself."

By this time they had turned into an inhabited walk; at the same moment a bell rang, and the Ensign, squeezing her arm till the sensation became painful, in order to secure his hold, dragged her along with all the speed he possessed.

"For heaven's sake, Mr. Gaskell, where are you hurrying me?" exclaimed she, panting for breath.

"Don't you hear the bell, Miss?" inquired Walter, with much seeming interest. "If we don't make haste we shall be too late."

"Too late!" echoed Fanny. "For what?"

"Oh! you are not up, I see, to the gossip of this place. Why the cascade, the prettiest sight in the garden, is going to be shewn off, and that bell is the signal. I would not miss it for fifty pounds."

Fanny was going to plead the impossibility of continuing that pace, when turning an angle, they ran full against Corbett. In the joy of meeting a rational and polished companion, she lost all remembrance of his faults, and hastily exclaimed, "Captain Corbett, have you seen Lord Moseley?"

"I have not, madam. Do you wish to find him?"

"Oh! I have no present wish on earth but to find my party."

"How came you separated?"

"No matter,—some other time,—every moment is precious, since I am convinced their distress equals my own." She was then hurrying away with Corbett, when Walter bawled out, the next time you ask my protection, pretty one, I'll take care not to be jilted in this manner. Now your

turn's served, you don't care what becomes of me." Lifting up her eyes, as if thanking providence for rescuing her from so inefficient a guide, she met the wondering looks and stedfast gaze of all the Newland family.

Ashamed of appearing to belong exclusively to Corbett, and shocked to think what construction their Grace's and Leslie would put upon Gaskell's coarse and reproachful speech, she turned aside her head to brush away the tear of mortified sensibility. And when again she directed her attention to the spot they occupied, and found it deserted, her distress exceeded all bounds. "Are they gone?" she inquired, in a faint voice.

"Yes. Rudely!—Insolently!" replied Corbett. "Marked you not the impertinent curiosity of their manner, and the scorn with which they neglected you?"

"I was too much chagrined at being seen without a party, and at their witnessing the ill-bred speech of that weak youth, to mark the peculiarities you men-

tion. If they designed to mortify me, they have succeeded to their utmost wish; for, surely no poor creature was ever so completely humbled as I am at this moment."

"If I can procure a coach, would you like to return home?" asked Corbett.

"Oh! no, no! I would not leave my friends in the distress I know they must be in for worlds. Why do we not walk quicker? We shall never overtake them at this pace."

"How can we be sure that walking quick will not take us farther from them? Who are they?"

"Lord Moseley, Lady Maria, and Miss Bloomfield."

"Why, my dear madam, I saw the young ladies in the rotunda, not ten minutes before I encountered you."

"Why did you not tell me this before?"

"Suffer me to retaliate, and say, why did not you tell me the names of your companions before?"

"True, true. Oh! take me to them.

Moseley, I doubt not, is flying round the gardens in search of me."

She now proceeded with renovated hope. Wherever Moseley had stationed the two friends, there she was convinced they would remain until his return from a fruitless and fatiguing search. They entered the rotunda. Fanny passed her eye twice round the circle, ere she could be convinced the company were all strangers. Sick with disappointment, she looked in the face of her companion, as if doubting the evidence of her own sight, and hoping his had been more successful; but, the appalling words, "they are not here!" confirmed her worst fears, and no encouragement to pursue the search had power to inspire hope.

Her watch pointed to a dissipated hour. Order and decorum had given place to noise and riot,—ebriety reeled through every walk,—females, whose profession it was impossible to mistake, singled out partners for the dance, and laughed and talked with the most licentious freedom.

This was no longer a place, Fanny felt assured, for a modest and virtuous female; yet, to quit it with no companion but Corbett, was a movement scarcely less indecorous. Her friends, she thought, must ere this have returned home; or, if not, the past gave little hope that any future advantage could be derived from perseverance; and, if she was fated to return under the Captain's protection, to protract the hour would increase the impropriety.

The last few minutes were passed in profound silence. We have seen what occupied Fanny's mind,—Corbett was not idle. His love for our heroine, if love could exist in such a breast, and the knowledge of her possessions had, as we have seen, carried him unjustifiable lengths. But, to be refused access, at the moment when his innocence must be clearly ascertained by Julia's letter, raised a tumult in his soul to which love was subservient. Revenge fully possessed him; and, had he lived at a period when heiresses were decoyed from their friends, and confined in dilapidated

castles or remote mansions, without other companion than a terror stricken domestic, Fanny would doubtless have had as many opportunities of shewing her heroism as other persecuted females. But, as such enterprises are unheard of in a well governed country, he was obliged to trust to common chance for a common mode of retaliating the injuries he was determined to suppose had been offered.

The meeting, under such uncommon circumstances, at Vauxhall, and the fruitless attempt to join her friends, placed her completely within his power; and a dawning project was floating in his mind, when Fanny, roused from her reverie by a noisy and tumultuous party then passing, said, in accents of alarm, "I believe if a coach could be procured, it would be most proper to return home. Lady Ann and my guardian would be displeased at my remaining here so late, with a party the most unobjectionable; but, when they are informed of my having apparently deserted my friends, and their unavailing search,

the consequences cannot be foreseen. Oh! let me hasten to relieve their minds. If no conveyance is to be had, I would walk to the world's end on such an errand."

Sir Lawrence Lounge, in company with a gaily dressed female, that moment passed. "A thought strikes me," said Corbett. "If the Baronet's carriage waits, I am sure he will lend it for your accommodation. Hallo! Sir Lawrence!" The Baronet turned. "This fair lady," continued Corbett, "is in some embarrassment. You don't seem in a hurry to forsake this vivifying spot,—we are,—and, if your carriage is in attendance, it can return after we are accommodated."

"The fact is, Corry," replied the intoxicated Baronet, "Miss Fitz-York has treated me rather cavalierly this evening; but, to convince her of my perfect forgiveness, the carriage and its master are both at her service." He then left his companion, and staggered towards them.

"Oh! for pity's sake, let me walk," said Fanny, in a low voice. "I would

rather crawl like the veriest reptile, than subject myself to the forward rudeness of intoxication."

Corbett, for reasons known only to himself, felt as little inclination to the Baronet's company as our heroine. "My dear Sir Lawrence!" he exclaimed, "your good nature must not be imposed upon; whatever pleasure your company might afford Miss Fitz-York at a future time, she now yields to the prior claims of another; and, by me, thanks you for the carriage, which shall return in half an hour."

"Gads me!" replied the Baronet. "I had forgot my charming Harriot. Well, good night, a pleasant ride, and compliments to the old block and her chip."

The latter words were unheard; for Corbett placed Fanny's arm within his, the moment he found they would be suffered to depart alone, and, with a speed that almost deprived her of breath, they reached the outward gate.

"Sir Lawrence Lounge's carriage!" vociferated the Captain.

"Here!" replied the servant; and Corbett handed her in, as the Duke of Newland and his family reached the spot, where their coach also waited.

After Fanny was seated, her companion addressed a few words in a whisper to the coachman, and was preparing to follow, when he was seized by two men, one of whom said, "noble Captain, you are our prisoner."

"On what account?" feebly asked Corbett, in a trembling voice.

"On what account, my hearty?" replied the man. "Why you speak like a culprit, and not in the bold terms you used to do, upon a paltry suspicion of debt. You had like to have bilked us by borrowing his honour's carriage, but your voice betrayed you. Come, we have a less splendid conveyance at hand, but it will serve your turn to-night," and away they dragged their prisoner.

This was doomed to be a night of terror to Fanny. Greatly as she disliked Corbett, his presence was a protection; and,

to return to the city alone,—in a borrowed carriage,—with strange servants,—and at that late hour, filled her with dismay. The footman twice inquired where she would be set down? At length, roused by the spirit of desperation, she faintly uttered, "Lombard-street," when Leslie Talbot begged leave to speak to her.

"The Duchess of Newland, madam," said he, "thinks you will be safer under her protection. The servants appear to be strange,—the streets are lonely and deserted,—without a protector, dangerous.—Mr. Strictland, if you are still his inmate—"

Fanny looked surprise.

"Shall be informed of your safety,—and, in the morning, if I can be made any way useful, I hope you will command me."

"I would not willingly trespass upon her Grace," replied Fanny, "and yet—"

"Talk not of trespass, madam. The Duchess is too considerate to suffer a lady she once loved——"

"Once!" repeated Fanny.

"Still loves,—to trust herself at this late

hour with unknown servants. The carriage waits. Allow me to lead you to her."

Fanny gave her trembling hand into the no less agitated one of Leslie, and with tottering steps descended.

Not satisfied with what she was doing, yet unable to fix upon a plan less exceptionable,—feeling herself in the situation of one, who, to the nicely-discerning Duchess and her amiable daughters must appear to have acted imprudently, if not criminally;—she advanced with downcast eyes and feelings of deep humiliation, to the carriage, in which the family were already seated.

The Duke received her tremulous hand from Leslie, and, pressing it with all the ardour of former attachment, placed her between himself and the Duchess.

A solemn silence of some moments followed; when her Grace said, " Vauxhall is not now to me a favourite place of amusement; yet, feeling as a mother, I rejoice that chance led me hither this even-

ing. Your situation, my young friend, when we met you in the garden, appeared both critical and distressing,—a situation in which, though I had no possible right to interfere, I was sorry to see the daughter of Lady Ann Fitz-York involved. But, when your only protector was taken from you, I reflected what would have been my own feelings, had a daughter of mine been in a similar situation; and hazarded the imputation of impertinence to shield you from danger."

"Impertinence!" sobbed Fanny, for the Duke's affectionate pressure had melted her to tears. "Your Grace is kind and considerate, and can never deserve the imputation of impertinence."

These few words were scarcely intelligible from excess of grief and over-wrought feelings; and, when she would have explained the scene of the past evening, her Grace, taking her hand, requested that no explanations of a painful nature might take place that night. "Is Lady Ann in town, my dear?" she added.

"Certainly, madam: or how could I be here?"

"I beg your pardon, but I do not see the impossibility of your being in London without her Ladyship. I am glad to hear it, however; and not sorry, on my own account, that accident has placed you for a moment under my protection; since it will produce a meeting with your respectable mother, when perhaps every other attempt would have failed."

This was saying indirectly, Fanny thought, that all friendly communication was at an end; and her bosom heaved a sigh to the memory of past happiness.

They no sooner reached Newland-house than our heroine was shewn to her apartment, with a strict charge from the kind Duchess, to banish all unpleasant thoughts for that night; and, in the morning, every thing should be done to secure her happiness. The young ladies were likewise dismissed, whilst the Duke and Duchess laid plans for the interest of Fanny and her supposed husband; and Leslie sent a mes-

senger to Lombard-street, with the following note:

"Lady Ann Fitz-York's daughter is well, and safe under the protection of the Duke and Duchess of Newland, who will be happy to see her Ladyship at any hour the most convenient.

"Her Grace bids me add, that she dines to-day, at seven, with a family party; and, if Lady Ann Fitz-York and Mr. Strictland will overlook a more formal invitation, and join the group, it will confer both honour and pleasure.

LESLIE TALBOT.

"Newland-house, Piccadilly,
Tuesday morning, four o'clock."

Her Grace's last words made an impression no effort of Fanny's could banish from her thoughts. "In the morning every thing shall be done to secure your happiness!" What could it mean? Leslie, if not already married, was too far engaged to recede; besides, by what magic knew

her Grace that he was necessary to her happiness? The more she pondered upon this important sentence, the more problematic it appeared; till, having wearied her mind with conjectures, she concluded, at length, that they were words of course to cheer her mind after her past troubles; and resigned herself to the protection of that great and good Being, who had delivered her from a situation fraught with difficulty,—perhaps danger.

A bright sun, and clothes of every description suited for the morning, tempted her to rise; though she was doubtful whether any of the family, except servants, would be stirring at nine o'clock. "Nine o'clock!" exclaims some sluggard of fashion, "why, I am in my first sleep at that hour!" That may be, fair lady, but my heroine has been accustomed to early rising; and no dissipation of the evening, however late, could tempt her to infringe upon it. I am not ignorant that people of fashion never quit their pillows at nine o'clock; but it was the hour of breakfast

wherever Lady Ann presided; and, her daughter's borrowed habiliments were adjusted at the usual time.

Fanny could aforetime hold counsel with her own thoughts to pleasure and profit; but now, they were at variance with both. However kind and useful the attentions of her Grace had proved, she could not help confessing, that pity and compassion were the sole instigators; and, that she must have suffered in her good opinion from the very circumstance which excited them. Albina and Sidney's looks were fraught with kindness; but, there was a scornful sneer upon the face of Philippa, which conveyed, in language not to be mistaken, that her conduct was suspicious, and her respectability doubtful.

To change a subject painfully oppressive, she wished for a book; any body's thoughts would be preferable to her own; but, the dressing-closet afforded none. She then opened the door of her room, and, with noiseless steps, reached the end of the gallery; all was solitude and still-

ness. In what direction to find the library she knew not; but, descending the stairs, determined to explore those apartments immediately within her view. The effort alone would rouse her imagination, and that was a point gained.

A door to the right opened to a spacious dining-parlour, but such a chilly coldness ran throughout, that she was fain to close the entrance, and seek a less dreary apartment. Crossing the hall, she found another room, visibly appropriated to the same use, but smaller, and with every appearance of comfort. Into this she strolled, without hope of finding what was the primary object of her search; but, the *tout ensemble* looked cheerful, and since she was doomed to be alone, why not remain here? at least till footsteps spoke the approach of some one who could direct her to the library.

For a time she tried to dissipate thought at the window, but the passing objects were void of interest; and she was fast sinking into dejection, when a light step

sounded from the hall. Fearful of missing an opportunity, she hastily opened the door, but the person was gone. Assured, however, of his or her vicinity, she called, in a firm but soft voice, "who goes there?" when quickly appeared, from an opening at the extreme corner of the hall, Leslie.

Shocked at the freedom of her appeal, and the imagined indecorum of her proceedings, she timidly continued, "I beg your pardon, Mr. Talbot, for interrupting your progress; but——"

"Talk not of interruption. I shall be honoured by your commands, and happy to obey them."

"Finding myself too early for the general assembling of the family, I applied, as I thought, to a domestic, simply to borrow a book. I will no longer detain you, than to beg you will have the goodness to send me one."

"You shall be obeyed. But might I not hope to be made otherwise useful?"

"If Lady Ann is informed of my being here——"

"She is."

"Then I can have no further inducement to trouble Mr. Talbot."

"It is not my intention to be intrusive;—but have you no letter or message for Captain Corbett?"

"Neither."

"At least none that you will confide to me."

The voice of the Duke was now heard, inquiring whether any of the family had made their appearance?

"Suffer me to lead you to my uncle, madam," added Leslie. "He will be found a more able, though not more willing counsellor."

Having led her to the breakfast-room, and paid his morning respects to the Duke, he left them together.

His Grace had been partial to Fanny from the first hour they became acquainted; so partial, that his dearest hope was to transplant her into his own family. At

the time his overtures were so mysteriously rejected by Lady Ann, he did not relinquish that hope; but thought the mistake, such he felt assured there was, would be cleared up at their next meeting. Her supposed marriage lessened her interest, but did not destroy his wish to see her happy; and, though Corbett was not a man to be respected by such characters as the Duke, he determined, for his wife's sake, whose fortune he understood was secured to Lady Ann for her life, to clear his present incumbrances, and make interest for his promotion in the army. Full of these benevolent designs, he rose that morning earlier than usual; and, leading Fanny to a chair, expressed his pleasure at the prospect of a *tête-à-tête*.

"You are not now to learn," said he, "the interest her Grace and I take in your concerns; and, though our wish for an union with your family—" Fanny started —"has been, unhappily for us, frustrated; we shall never forget the pleasant hours spent in your society, nor cease to regret,

that they cannot, as matters have turned out, be repeated."

Our heroine felt indignant. Could the Duke and Duchess be so illiberal as to cast her off and disdain her society, because she had, unfortunately, in their eyes, no doubt, imprudently been found under the protection of Corbett! and without listening to her defence, or even wishing she were able to clear her conduct? Be it so. Friendship of so frail a texture is scarcely worth the trouble of preserving.

During this mental soliloquy, his Grace seemed pondering upon matters of importance. At length, he inquired, "what she thought might be the amount of Corbett's debts?"

"Indeed, my Lord Duke," said she, with surprise, "I know not. How should I?"

"Is he frequently involved in the same way?"

"This is the first time, to my knowledge."

"I hope it will be the last."

"That hope does your Grace honour."

"Not for any liking I bear the Captain,

but for the sake of his poor deluded wife."

"Deluded indeed!" echoed Fanny, with a sigh.

"I hope his conduct does not give her cause to repent her marriage?"

"It does—it does!" replied she, emphatically.

"Then he is a villain!"

"I fear it will be proved so."

"Why do you not leave him then?"

"Me!"

"And return to the bosom of your family. They will receive you with joy."

"Me! Surely excess of feeling for Mrs. Corbett has deranged your Grace's mind. *I* never *left* the bosom of my family, and my being with Captain Corbett, last night, was the effect of accident."

"Fanny—my dear Fanny!—so I must call you, excess of feeling for Corbett's wife has nearly deranged me; but, if *you* are not that wife,—if *you* are still *unmarried*,—I shall go quite mad—with joy."

"If so," said Fanny, smiling, "I had

better let your Grace remain in error. But how heard you the report of my being married, and to Corbett?"

"The Captain told it himself to Philippa."

"Impossible! Bad as he is, he would not—could not assert so impudent a falsehood. And yet, as Miss Heathcote is nearly, and likely to be more dearly allied to your Grace, I should be sorry to impeach her veracity."

"Philippa is nearly allied to the Duchess, but she will never be dearly united to me. Have you any other meaning?"

"Perhaps not."

"Nay—be candid."

"I am trenching on forbidden ground, and interfering very improperly in your Grace's family concerns."

"Not improperly, if I request it. How is Miss Heathcote likely to be more dearly united to me?"

"By her union with—Mr. Talbot."

"Never! Talbot's affections do not that way tend."

"But, if her Grace wishes it——"

"My wife wish Leslie to marry Philippa! But, here she comes, let her speak for herself. Pray, Duchess, did you ever wish the union of Talbot and your niece?"

"I never dreamt of such a thing. Who says I did?"

"Captain Corbett, madam," replied Fanny. "He gave me a splendid account of the nuptial preparations, and described a service of plate as the marriage present."

"What a prodigious talent of invention some people have!" exclaimed the Duchess. "But, as he is your husband, my dear Mrs. Corbett—" "He is not her husband!—She is not Mrs. Corbett!—But our own little darling Fanny Fitz-York after all." Her Grace looked grave. "Caroline, my love, what's the matter?" continued the Duke. "You don't half relish my communication."

"If this young lady be not Corbett's wife, how will she explain the scenes we witnessed last night?"

"Very true!" said the Duke, seriously.

Fanny now began her exculpation. She described, with sincerity and candour, every circumstance that had passed,—even her very thoughts, from the moment she entered the garden to the present time. Her fears,—her terrors,—her mortifications,—were painted in such glowing colours, that her auditors felt every scene she described, and watched her varying countenance with sympathetic emotion. "Thus," she concluded, "I have related 'a plain unvarnished tale,' and throw myself upon the judgment of my noble hearers, for sentence or acquittal." "Not guilty, upon my honour," said his Grace, with impressive and unaffected gravity.

"So say I, Duke," replied the Duchess. "And, if our fair friend's recital did not bear the genuine stamp of truth, I have a witness at hand to corroborate it; for Albina, I am informed, lost her diamond sprig in the garden last night, and thus by her carelessness involved this dear child in great perplexity and danger."

"Oh! name them not," said Fanny, "but as blessings in disguise. Had it not been for these perplexities and dangers, I had not now been reinstated in your good opinion; to secure which, I would undergo a much more severe mortification."

The morning repast was now brought in, followed by Leslie, the image of despair; and, the young ladies being summoned, Philippa, as usual, presided at the table. After assisting her aunt and uncle, she requested to know if *Mrs. Corbett*,—laying great stress upon the name,—chose coffee or chocolate?

"Apropos! Philippa," said his Grace, "I think it was Captain Corbett himself who informed you of his marriage?"

"Certainly."

"And to Miss Fitz-York?"

"Assuredly."

"'Tis very odd. This lady denies that such marriage ever took place; but, certainly, Corbett—or YOU, Philippa, must know best."

Leslie's cup shook in his hand. Philippa

also trembled and turned pale; not at the Duke's words, for of the marriage she had no doubt, but his *emphasis*,—his *manner*, —his being so long tête-à-tête with Fanny, —filled her with forebodings of an unpleasant nature. "Upon undoubted authority," continued the Duke, "Corbett likewise informed Miss Fitz-York that the nuptial presents were prepared; and that Talbot,—my nephew,—was going to lead Miss Heathcote to the altar. Perhaps Leslie will deny that, but Captain Corbett, or *you*, Philippa, ought to know best. In a word, there appears to have been plots and contrivances, in which Captain Corbett and you are confederated; and, until they are explained to my satisfaction, you must avoid the society at Newland-House."

Miss Heathcote arose, and casting a malignant glance at our heroine, said, "plot and contrivance there has been, as Mrs. Corbett or Miss Fitz-York can testify. Plot and contrivance first brought her to Newland-Abbey. The heir of a Dukedom had too many charms, in the eye of de-

cayed nobility, for Lady Ann to forego the chance of engrafting her baby-faced daughter on a nobler stock. Their plans seem to be in a prosperous way, though how that modest fair one will explain the disgraceful scenes of the foregoing evening, I am at a loss to comprehend. Your unbounded partiality, my Lord Duke, to the syren, last summer, was a theme of universal discussion, and justly condemned. You, my dear Duchess, foster a serpent in your bosom, that will sting you to death. Leslie will be blessed with a fashionable wife; and his cousins never want an example of what art and unbounded vanity can accomplish." She then left the room, pulling the door after her, with a force that almost shook the building, and, shortly after, quitted the house for ever.

Leslie heard what passed in silence; amazement unmixed with one pleasurable sensation rooted him to the spot. The malice of Philippa, in many of her representations, was manifest; but, if Fanny was not Corbett's wife, what was she?

He shuddered, as he mentally asked himself that question, and wished,—most fervently wished,—that her marriage had remained uncontradicted.

The Duchess observed him with attention, and, conscious of the acuteness of his feelings, from what her own had been under a similar delusion, hastened to relieve them. "Philippa," she observed, "like most people actuated by envy, and a love of slander, has over-shot her mark. Her falsehoods are too obvious to give pain, and her inuendoes too contemptible for notice. To you, my dear Leslie, and my beloved daughters, I present, with heartfelt pleasure, this interesting girl, as a newly-recovered blessing. Her mind is as faultless as her person, and I could not pay a more just tribute to her excellence, were I to write a volume in her praise."

Before this sentence was half finished, Leslie rushed to the feet of our heroine, and, seizing both her hands, bent over them with the most sincere devotion. When the Duchess ceased, he raised his head, and

beheld the tear of sensibility resting upon her cheek, like the dew-drop upon a half blown rose, and the downcast look of modesty beaming from her eye. Albina and Sidney compelled him to rise, by claiming a share in their young friend; and, after the first flow of joy had abated, the now happy family sat down to a calm and pleasant repast, anticipating the hour when Lady Ann's presence would confirm their bliss.

CHAP. XI.

AN EXPLANATION,—A SHORT TRIBUTE TO PHILANTHROPY,—THE HEIRESS APPEARS IN HER TRUE COLOURS,—TWO WEDDINGS,—AND A RETURN TO THE TOWER OF TREMORNE.

Long before the period of dinner, Lady Ann and Mr. Strictland arrived, for their impatience to see Fanny, to be assured from her own mouth that she was indeed well, and to learn the cause of her separation from her friends, made them wave ceremony. It would be a needless waste of words to describe their reception: I shall merely say, it was every thing that was kind, respectful, and affectionate, and the smile of delight which irradiated the countenance of our heroine, as she flew from

the fond embrace of a parent to the extended arms of her guardian, gave her an appearance, in the eyes of the enraptured Leslie, almost celestial.

"Your Grace and my Lord Duke," said Lady Ann, after they were seated, "must know the sorrow I experienced last night, before you can properly appreciate my joy on receipt of Mr. Talbot's note. My nephew and the young ladies had been returned nearly an hour, but would not leave me in the misery and uncertainty their recital occasioned. At the moment you quitted them, my dear child, it appears they were listening with avidity to an interesting story related by Moseley. When he concluded, Maria says, she turned to address you, but found, to her astonishment, that you had quitted her side. For a moment they stopped, expecting your approach."

"That moment probably decided my fate," said Fanny.

"They then returned in the same direction, but every effort to trace you proved

vain. At length, Moseley procured seats for his companions, and set forward alone. I need not say his expedition was also fruitless; but it would not have ceased until the gardens had been entirely deserted, had he not accidentally espied the waiter who attended your supper table, of whom he made a hopeless inquiry, as indeed it proved; but an officer, hearing you described, without hesitation said, 'Miss Fitz-York had been for a short time under his protection; but, meeting a person she seemed to like better, had deserted him in a very unhandsome manner, and he had no doubt they left the gardens together.' 'His name, Sir?' said Moseley. 'To the best of my recollection, she called him Captain Corbett,' replied his informer. This account was, in some degree, consolatory. You were in the hands of a person you knew, and who was well known to your connections; accordingly, they decided to quit Vauxhall immediatley. When they found me alone, and told me what I have now been relating, my anxiety

almost amounted to phrenzy. That you were under Corbett's protection was to me no consolation, nor could I believe you would willingly seek it. 'Corbett,' said I, 'is not the man Fanny Fitz-York would trust, except upon an emergency the most distressing.' But, my dear friends, I am trespassing upon your patience, with the garrulity of an old woman, too happy, in having recovered her treasure, to consider that it is comparatively of little value to any one except herself."

"Once in her life Lady Ann Fitz-York asserts the thing that is not true," said the Duchess. "Have you no interest in the recovered treasure, Leslie?"

"This worshipped being permits me to say I have," replied he, taking her hand, and leading her to Lady Ann. "If your Ladyship," he continued, "will sanction our love,—I must,—I will say *ours*,—my respect and gratitude shall know no bounds."

"Fanny, — Duke, — Duchess, — am I awake?" said Lady Ann, in amazement.

"I hope we are all awake, my dear ma-

dam," replied his Grace; "or else, that this dream of happiness may last till dooms-day. Your Ladyship once refused my proposals, on the score of fortune, and some other objection, which all the boasted sense of my witty family could not understand. You would not believe me, if I said I *preferred* a portionless wife for our Leslie; but I honestly declare that wealth to us is secondary to happiness, and that I would rather receive Fanny Fitz-York as our future Duchess, poor and pennyless, than any other female with princely domains. So much for your first objection; the other, at some future period, we shall beg your Ladyship to explain; at present, you must be impatient for the detail of our Fanny's wanderings. Relate them, my dear, exactly as you did to us. Omit not one observation,—suppress not one thought."

Fanny literally obeyed the Duke's injunctions, and many an audible sigh burst from the bosom of her mother, during the recital. When she stopped, at the period

where she before closed, the Duke said, smiling, "you have not done Fanny?"

"If I have omitted any thing, your Grace's memory is better than mine."

"Not omitted, my dear, but there is something to add." Fanny blushed. "Nay, child," continued he, "don't be ashamed of confessing, that Caroline and I, reverting to the days of our youth, left you and Leslie to the comforts of a tête-à-tête—that he confessed his passion,—that you bad him not despair,—and that the marriage is to take place before the birthday."

Ere any objection could be made to this hasty proceeding, dinner was announced; and, what is very extraordinary, the repast ended without one observation upon cookery, or discovering that the present company knew more of made dishes than the person who prepares them. At an early hour, Lady Ann's carriage arrived, and, in consequence of her last night's watching, they were suffered to depart, after his Grace had informed Mr. Strictland that

he would see him, on business, the following day, at two o'clock.

At the hour appointed, the worthy merchant and his noble visitor held a conference, when the latter, by Lady Ann's desire, made discoveries not more surprising than delightful.

Mankind, with all their boasted apathy, —however disinterested in their professions, —invariably rejoice at the prospect of increasing wealth. 'Tis true, various men have various motives for this universal desire; some to hoard,—some to spend,—others to give,—but the being who declares himself insensible of its value,—who does not wish to possess it, for one or other of these ends, is a hypocrite, and the truth is not in him. The Duke was no hypocrite. He candidly confessed, that, "though money was an evil, in the opinion of some sage people, it was a very useful one; and, since the present state of society could not exist without it, the more a man had, if he used it properly, the happier he would be."

"Give me neither poverty nor riches," said our moderate forefather; but the sentence is now obsolete, and the present cry , "give me riches in abundance." If, as the good Duke said, we use them properly, then they are indeed a blessing; but how few follow this maxim! Our country has, indeed, produced a solitary instance,—a combination of youth, wealth, and charity, perhaps unparalleled in any other.* What an individual *can* do, he does to stem the torrent of distress; but, until benevolence becomes more general, the quantity of good must be limited to a comparative *few*, whilst the mass remain a melancholy proof, that charity is in every body's mouth, but reaches not the heart.

This digression, for which I beg my reader's pardon, was occasioned by the perusal of a provincial paper, wherein the benevolencies of this warm-hearted philanthropist were copiously detailed,—not by

* Mr. Webb, from an income of £12,000, devotes £10,000 to the poor and necessitous.

his own desire, I venture to say,—for "charity vaunteth not itself,"—but by the committee appointed to distribute his munificence properly.

When the Duke met his family, he assumed an appearance of more than usual gravity; and being pressed for an explanation, desired his nephew to prepare for a disappointment.

Leslie turned pale, but said nothing.

"A disappointment!" exclaimed the Duchess. "Not in our fondest hopes, surely."

"Our fondest hopes, Caroline, ought, and do rest with the present party, our children, and our nephew. But 'tis cruel to keep you in suspense. During my absence this morning, I received intimation, from the friends of a young, lovely, and well-born heiress, that an union of our families would be agreeable, and highly to the interest of Leslie and the girls. How few men are proof against advantages so substantial, I am a living example; for, until this proposal roused my ambition, and

convinced me, almost against my will, that a prudential marriage was the most likely to prove a happy one, I was ready, nay willing, to sacrifice interest, and all its glorious appendages, to Love."

"And are you not so still, my dear uncle?" asked Leslie. "Consider your honour!"

"Consider the heiress, with an unincumbered estate of five thousand a-year, and a hundred thousand pounds at her bankers."

"If she had a hundred millions, I would refuse her," said Leslie, warmly.

"Just now, you would," replied his Grace. "But give reason fair play, and you will be convinced, as firmly as I am, that this young lady, with immense possessions, will make you as happy, perhaps more so, than Fanny Fitz-York, with no dowry but her beauty and good qualities."

"I wish you had never left home this morning, Duke," said her Grace.

"So do I," added Albina, "if Talbot's happiness is to be the sacrifice."

"Our dear father is only joking," said Sidney. "I see it in the corner of his eye."

"The joke will be all your own, Lady Sidney, unless Talbot act in conformity to my wishes."

"But you have made no positive engagement, Duke, with the lady's friends?" said her Grace.

"I have pledged my honour that he shall *see* her."

"And, after seeing her, if I am still averse to the union——"

"If you are such a senseless idiot, I must per force submit,—but on condition that you visit not the city, till after to-morrow's dinner, to which I have engaged my heiress and her friends."

Leslie bowed obedience, and immediately left the room.

When Fanny heard the extent of her late father's possessions, she looked at her mother with added respect and reverence; for had she not, in obedience to the will of her deceased husband, and for her individual

good, as he wisely thought, devoted the best part of her existence to retirement, almost to obscurity, and forfeited the friendship of her family? From these thoughts she reverted to the period when she could willingly, cheerfully, have accompanied Moseley to the altar, had not her reported poverty been an unconquerable objection in the mind of Lady Mountcastle. That she was preserved from an union that would, she now felt assured, have made her miserable,—however mortifying at the time,—she bowed with gratitude and thankfulness, acknowledged, with meek submission, the short-sightedness of poor mortals, and the over-ruling hand of providence, which brings good out of evil.

Our heroine smilingly agreed to perform her part in the Duke's plot upon Leslie. To tempt him from his allegiance, she felt assured, was impossible; for, had he not given convincing proof that love,—pure disinterested love,—was the ground-work of his attachment? On that foundation she

rested in confident security, nor dreaded the allurements of wealth to draw him from her, even in thought.

At the appointed time, Mr. Strictland's carriage drew up at Newland-House. A thundering knock made Leslie start; but, quickly recovering himself, as if the least want of courage would disgrace the attachment he conceived to be his pride and glory, he roused his feelings, and prepared to receive the young lady, with that consideration due indiscriminately to all his uncle's guests.

His Grace now entered, leading a lady, dressed with dazzling splendour, but whose veil, the Duchess thought, might have been removed, previous to her entrance. "To her Grace, the Duchess of Newland," said the Duke, advancing no farther than the door, "my daughters, Lady Albina and Lady Sidney Talbot, and my nephew, the Honourable Leslie Talbot, I present this lady, as my esteemed friend, and, I hope, future niece."

The Duchess thought there was some-

thing extremely indelicate in this mode of presentation; whilst Talbot turned away in disgust. It appeared as though the Duke wished to trepan him into a marriage, but no advance, on his part, he determined should countenance it at present, or lead the female, of whose delicacy he could have no very high opinion, to expect his future attentions.

"This silent and distant reception, Duchess," continued his Grace, "and the abrupt rudeness of Leslie, must give my fair friend a very unfavourable idea of our family politeness; a feeling I determined to put to the test, before she unveiled those charms that must create admiration."

"I feel for the young lady's situation," replied the Duchess, "and think I never saw your Grace to less advantage. If she come buoyed up with hopes of Leslie's hand, I pity her; if she suppose her wealth can purchase it, the sooner she is undeceived the better. Her reception, I confess, has wanted both hospitality and politeness; but it bears equal proportion to

her own lack of decorum, and the want of feeling manifested by her friends. Why did they not, at least, sanction this extraordinary visit by their presence?"

"Does my visit, dear Duchess, indeed require the sanction of my friends?" said Fanny, throwing back her veil.

"Miss Fitz-York!" exclaimed the ladies.

"My own Fanny!" said Leslie, as he seized her unreluctant hand, and led her to the Duchess. "Have you joined in my uncle's deception, to try the strength of my attachment? Surely it was unnecessary. Rich in native worth and loveliness, your heart is a treasure I would not barter for all the wealth of my uncle's imaginary heiress; though she were young as Hebe, beautiful as Venus, and possessed more wisdom than ever fell to the lot of woman. I am glad, however, this votary of wealth exists no where but in his own imagination."

"Oh! but she does," said the Duke.

"Well, well, we'll forgive her," replied

the Duchess, "if she is not brought forward to rival our Fanny."

"Our Fanny," rejoined his Grace, "is herself the rival I set up. Miss Fitz-York is declared heiress to the splendid possessions I mentioned, and has no objection to bestow both them and herself on Leslie Talbot."

"Objections!" repeated Fanny, looking affectionately at her lover.

Lady Ann and Mr. Strictland entered, with the servant, who announced dinner, and soon afterwards the whole party adjourned to Drury-lane Theatre. Lady Milford and Lord Mountcastle's family occupied the adjoining seats; and, to complete their satisfaction, Mrs. Bloomfield, with her usual disregard to ceremony, entered her Grace's box, and desired they would make room for herself and Barbara. The widow, through fear or love, was always received with complacency; the present company were universally disposed to respect her, and shewed it by the kindest greetings.

The business of the stage, which she never voluntarily interrupted, suffering a short suspension, she addressed each individual in her own manner; then turning her penetrating eyes upon Mr. Strictland, inquired the reason of Fanny's splendid appearance? "Lady Ann has hitherto," she continued, "given her *enemies* little cause to blame her, but this evening her *friends* cannot but call her prudence in question. From that smile, I'll bet a wager, this is some foolery of yours, Strictland. A plot, perhaps, to catch the Duke's heir, or some weak young man, whose eyes are to be dazzled with finery."

An explanation, in a low voice, followed. Fanny's pretensions to rank and splendour were joyfully admitted, and her mother's prudence and moderation more than ever exalted.

Understanding Lady Mountcastle was not in the family secret, Mrs. Bloomfield, who never lost an opportunity of mortifying those who really deserved it, leaned

over the box to congratulate her Ladyship on the honours and greatness that would redound to her family, through the medium of Miss Fitz-York.

"Of Fanny!" said her Ladyship. "How?"

"Surely Lady Mountcastle is not now to be informed of her niece's intended alliance with the heir of Newland."

"Is it possible?"

"And, as a proof that in herself centre all their wishes, the match was solicited at the time she was thought to be poor and portionless."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Countess. "Had I acted differently, which I can now never enough regret, Fanny and Mr. O'Brian's fortune would have blessed Lord Moseley."

"Had your Ladyship acted like a *sister*, and cherished those who ought to have been your *pride* and *boast*, not only Fanny and *Mr. O'Brian's* fortune would have been secured to your family, but the *here-*

ditary possessions of her *late father*, with accumulated interest from the period of his death."

"It cannot be. My brother-in-law died poor."

"He died worth *five thousand a-year*, now nearly doubled by the long minority of his *heiress*."

"If this be indeed a truth, why was it concealed?"

"To answer the very purpose it has now completed. Mr. Fitz-York knew the world. He was well aware, that many would seek the *hand*, more than the *friendship* of his *heiress*, who would contemn her, both as an *acquaintance* and a *wife*, without that advantage. Mr. Talbot and his friends bowed before the modest unassuming worth of nature's own production, and looked for no advantage that did not dwell therein. Their discernment and disinterestedness have been nobly rewarded, and I hope it will act as a lesson, to those who need it, against *selfish pride* and *unfeeling ambition*."

Lady Mountcastle completely mortified by the exultation of the widow's manner, and sick at heart with the tenor of her words, pleaded indisposition, and shortly afterwards retired with her Lord, to brood over what was now inevitable; and to find out, in the circle of their acquaintance, a wife for Moseley, who would add wealth and honour to their family: for, strange as it may appear, she had no suspicion of his attachment to Miss Bloomfield. Once disappointed by maternal pride, he resolved to keep his present pursuit a secret, until he could announce Barbara as his wife. They were both of an age to carve their own happiness; her fortune would answer every expectation of his mother; and want of birth the nobility of the present day had wisely learnt to contemn.

Whilst Lady Mountcastle's mind was in its first ebullition, from the two-fold intelligence, communicated somewhat spitefully, she thought, by the widow, she wrote the following letter to Lord Milford.

"Was it acting the part of a friend or a brother, my Lord, to keep me in ignorance of Fanny Fitz-York's claims to fortune? You knew I could have no objection, but the want of it, to her alliance; and yet, when Moseley was suffering the most acute anguish, from my opposition, —when Lady Ann might have been easily wrought upon,—and her daughter felt no predilection in favour of another,—you cruelly gave a wound to my peace, I shall never recover,—deprived my son of an establishment beyond his hopes,—and subjected me to the sarcastic sneers of a city dame, whose plebeian daughter has, I know not how, gained a footing in my family.

"All this you have done from the most churlish, the most inconsiderate motives, since they could have nothing in view but my mortification, and the ruin of Lord Moseley.

"Girls in whom family and fortune unite, are not every-day commodities. The first is indispensible in the wife of our

son, the latter we cannot do without; for, between the foreign embassy, the loss of Mr. O'Brian's property, of which we made sure, and the unavoidable necessity of keeping up appearances, Lord Mountcastle's rent-roll is miserably diminished; and, unless you have influence enough to procure him a lucrative sinecure, we shall be obliged to compromise with the low wretches who daily beset our gate, and, in the end, thank them, if we are allowed to rusticate upon as many hundreds a-year as we are now spending thousands.

"Meditate upon this, and let the result be favourable to

"Your friend and sister,

"E. MOUNTCASTLE.

"May 10, 1813."

Her messenger returned almost immediately with the following answer:

"The honour of a peer, Lady Mountcastle, is not to be sacrificed to family feeling. Mr. Fitz-York relied on mine

when he made me the executor of his strange will; and, though I declined to act, I was by no means authorized to divulge a secret he thought, however erroneously, of importance to his daughter's future welfare.

"I understand, from Lady Milford, that Moseley once stood high in the good graces of Lady Ann and Frances; you best know on what ground he lost his balance, and tumbled down the ladder of fortune. If a mother's hand aided his descent, she has no one to blame but herself; and, least of all, me, who took more than ordinary pains to convince Lady Ann of the absurdity of acting up to the letter of the testament.

"I am sorry to hear that imprudence has injured your Lord's fortune. Keeping up appearances, without a solid foundation, is not imprudent only, it is sinful; since it involves the labouring class of society, many of whom are peeping through the bars of a prison,—not from their own extravagance or thoughtlessness, but be-

cause they have sunk their all, without chance of remuneration, in the thankless service of those who choose to keep up appearances.

"Lucrative sinecures are at this crisis looked upon with a jealous eye. Certain meddling politicians pretend to cry them down as a grievance; when, in fact, they are necessary emoluments of place, and trifling rewards for those who toil in the service of the state. This being the present posture of affairs, you will see the necessity of waiting until the storm blows over, before any thing of that nature can be done to retrieve your estate; meanwhile, I think the plan of rustication a good one. A couple of years passed in Wales might realize enough to settle your affairs, and by changing the word "banishment" into "a party of pleasure," you would reap both corporeal and mental benefit. Besides, there are plenty of rich heiresses, I am told, in the principality.

"The length of this letter ought to convince you of the high favour in which

you stand; but yours reached me at a vacant hour, and I take advantage of it to assure you of my regard.

"MILFORD.

"Monday evening."

There was such a mixture of bitter and sweet,—so much reproach blended with consolation in this epistle, that the Countess knew not at first whether to be angry or pleased.

At length, she called her Lord to a consultation; and, after much for and against, the latter strongly advocated by her Ladyship, the Welch journey was agreed upon, as a choice of two evils.

Lord Milford sent his own solicitor to make the best agreement he could with the creditors; and every thing was finally arranged, except the hour of their departure, when a morning paper announced tidings that totally changed their prospects. The paragraph ran thus.

"Yesterday were married, by special licence, at Newland-house, Piccadilly, the

Honourable Leslie Talbot, nephew and heir to the Duke of Newland, to Frances, only daughter of Lady Ann Fitz-York. On the same day and hour, at St. George's Church, Hanover-square, Lord Moseley, son to the Earl of Mountcastle, led to the altar Miss Bloomfield, only child of the late Benjamin Bloomfield, Esq. merchant, and heiress to his immense wealth. Immediately after the ceremony, Lord and Lady Moseley joined the party at Newland-house, from whence the two youthful couples, attended by all his Grace's family, and the mother and friends of Mrs. Talbot, left town for Oxfordshire, where the most splendid preparations are made for their reception."

"This is some newspaper forgery," said the Countess, when Maria ceased reading. "Moseley would never marry without consulting us."

"He had so little cause to be satisfied when he last consulted us upon the same subject," replied the Earl, "that I should not wonder if it prove true."

"A plebeian alliance!" exclaimed the Countess.

"But a noble fortune," rejoined the Earl.

"The folks we shall be obliged to associate with!" reiterated her Ladyship.

"Are mighty good people in their way, I dare say," answered his Lordship.

"The ridicule that will follow us whenever we appear in public!" vociferated the Countess.

"Is nothing to the scoffs and sneers that would follow us into Wales," replied the Earl.

"Very true; your Lordship has accidentally stumbled upon a palliative. The newspaper calls the young person's wealth immense, and next to nobility that is certainly most desirable."

"It ought to carry the *preference* in our circumstances," said the Earl. "Had Moseley married the portionless daughter of a peer, instead of being extricated from the perpetual plague of duns, we should have been farther involved, in order to

keep up appearances; and then a journey into Wales would have been unavailing."

"I declare, my Lord, you speak like an oracle! Thirty thousand will relieve our difficulties, and the remainder,—for a remainder there must be to some amount,—otherwise the word *immense* is inapplicable, will form an establishment for the young couple without lessening our own income."

Lord Mountcastle smiled at the ease with which his Lady appropriated so considerable a sum; but, as the idea had brought her into good humour, he said nothing to overturn it. Moseley's own servant that moment entered with a letter, couched in the most dutiful and conciliating terms. The postscript ran thus, "my beloved Barbara, as an atonement, she says, for intruding into your Lordship's family uninvited, incloses an order for thirty thousand pounds, to pay off incumbrances, and to convince her parents, if they will allow her to call them so, that no selfish motives governed her choice, and that she cannot be happy whilst any un-

easiness, in her power to remove, hangs over them."

"A noble girl, by my faith!" exclaimed the Earl, as he looked at the order. "Our tour into Wales, if you are still inclined to make one, Countess, may now truly be called a party of pleasure."

This letter caused a total revolution in the affairs of his Lordship. The solicitor who before negociated an accommodation, now made prompt payment of every demand; and, the unexampled generosity of her daughter-in-law, convinced Lady Mountcastle, that kindness and philanthropy were not confined to nobility; though she still maintained, that some of the nobler virtues exclusively belonged to them.

The first of June brought the bridal party back to town; Sir Herbert and Lady Huntley, who joined them in Oxfordshire, remained the Duke's guests, as did likewise Lady Ann Fitz-York; but Moseley and his bride repaired immediately to Berkeley-square, where they had insured

themselves a reception of the most substantial kind. Their welcome from his Lordship and Maria sprung from the heart and glistened in the eye; but, in her Ladyship's manner there was so much effort, so much studied pains to be agreeable, that it fell short of her intention. Moseley and Barbara, however, were too happy in themselves, to be fastidious about the motives of others; so long as she appeared satisfied, they gave her full credit for being so.

Every article of court paraphernalia had been previously ordered, with a carelessness of expense that did honour to the munificence of the good Duke and Duchess. Lady Moseley scarcely yielded to her new relative in splendour; and Lady Huntley, who made her appearance at St. James's, for the first time, was much and deservedly admired. The Countess, instead of blushing for her daughter-in-law's want of dignity, was heard to declare, that *considering all things*, her deportment was *wonderful;* whilst Lady Milford roundly

asserted her superiority to many who had breathed the court air from their infancy. Let it be sufficient to say, in this stage of our work, that the young people were all graciously received,—that Lady Ann called it the proudest day of her life,—and, that the newspapers made amends for former neglect, by the most elaborate praise of our heroine's person, dress, and behaviour.

A congratulatory letter from Mr. Cavendish arriving soon afterwards, with information that his orders respecting the Tower had been faithfully obeyed, and that it was ready for the reception of company; the same party which formed the procession into Oxfordshire, with the addition of Lord and Lady Mountcastle and Maria, proceeded to this ancient seat of the Fitz-Yorks, where open house was kept for a fortnight, and liberal donations bestowed upon the poor.

The good Vicar, the worthy Mr. Gaskell, and Major Stokes, during that period almost lived at the Tower; whither also

Mr. and Mrs. Leigh came as often as their other avocations would permit. Julia's delicate health allowed her not to join the gay throng; but Fanny and Rose frequently stole to the vicarage, and revived her sinking spirits by their cheerful converse. Aunt Susy blessed her stars at their approach, and detailed with wonderful exactness, the dreams which foretold our heroine's elevation; and the coaches and chariots with which her tea-cup, morning and night, was filled. The children, for whom our heroine brought presents of various descriptions, hung round her neck with the fondest gratitude for past and present benefits; unknowing of her future designs in their favour,—designs approved both by Leslie and Lady Ann.

Passing through the church-yard, the recollection of their juvenile friend, drew a sigh from Fanny and Rose. "Poor Harry!" ejaculated the former, as she brushed away a tear. "Aye—poor Harry!" responded Rose. "But we ought rather to rejoice than grieve at his death; since

his attachment to his early companion,—an attachment formed on the purest esteem and the liveliest friendship, could have been attended with nothing but misery and disappointment. He was well prepared to meet his *God* at the time of his departure; but, we none of us know, we cannot even guess, how subsequent distress might have wrought upon a mind irritable and sensitive as Henry's. Perhaps self-destruction——"

"Oh! stop, my friend!" cried Fanny. "Finish not a sentence so replete with horror!"

Sir Herbert and Leslie gave a timely interruption to this melancholy scene, by springing over a low wall, and chiding them for their absence. Fanny smiled through her tears at this lively rebuke; and, having explained the fate of the youth whose memory they were sanctifying, Leslie, drawing her arm through his, proposed to erect a neat marble monument over his ashes, as a just tribute of praise to departed worth and lamented virtue.

Having brought my heroine to the seat of her ancestors, and the place of her early pilgrimage,—having made her as happy as this transitory "feverish existence" will permit,—I take my leave, with a firm hope, that the relative situation in which she now stands, or may hereafter be placed, will be as irreproachable as her morning of life; and, that Leslie may ever bless the day which gave to his arms a lovely unsophisticated female, bred in the shades of retirement, and educated under the fostering care of a sensible and prudent mother.

Ninety-nine readers out of every hundred will here close the book, and probably bless their stars that the tedious work is concluded. But have a moment's patience. I only want to thank you, kind ladies and gentlemen, for the honour of your company through my toilsome expedition; and to hope the tour has not been altogether destitute of instruction or amusement. Should it unhappily have failed in both, my judgment alone is in fault; for

I declare, honestly and candidly, that to instil virtue and morality has been my aim, however I may have erred in the means.

If I could hope it would mitigate censure, or deprecate criticism, I would own these volumes a first literary attempt; but no excuse of that kind can sanction the introduction of a faulty or improper work, much less recommend it.

To the candour of the critics, therefore, and the good nature of the public, I commit the cause of

FANNY FITZ-YORK,

HEIRESS OF TREMORNE.

THE END.

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